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# SHORT POEMS

BY

ALEXANDER SUTHERLAND, M.A.



MELVILLE, MULLEN & SLADE

MELBOURNE AND LONDON

1890



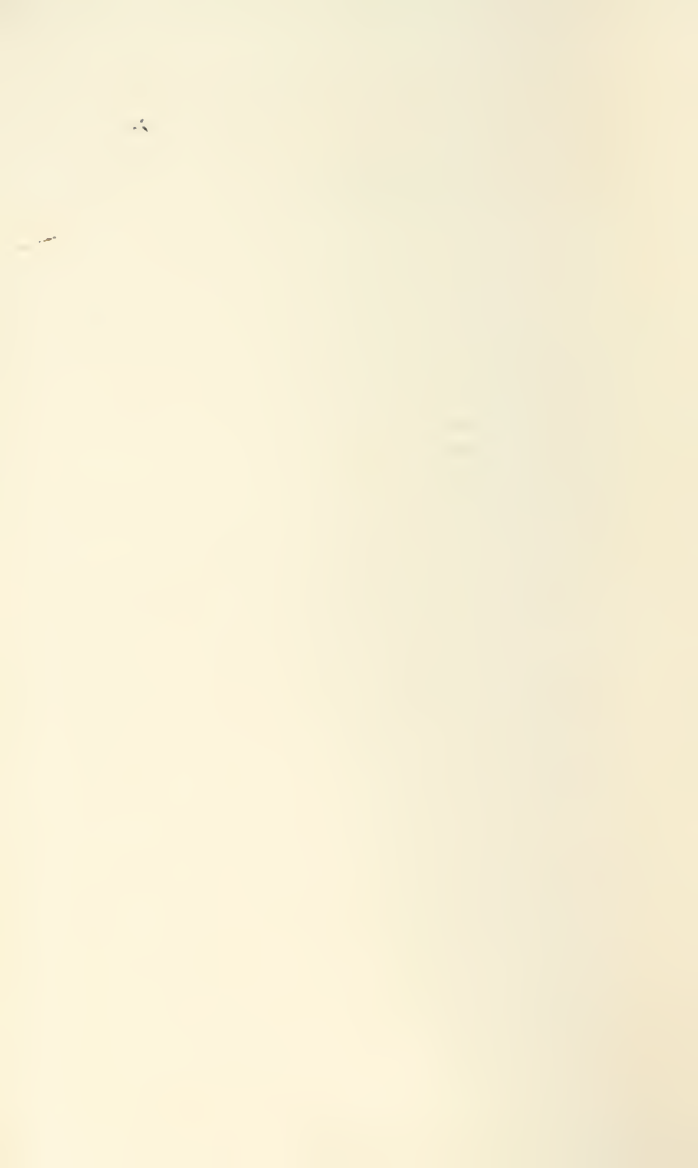
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## Preface.



**M**Y little book, that dost enfold  
The thoughts I sometimes cherish,  
And must thou forth into the cold,  
And only bloom to perish?  
Alas! thou ne'er wilt meet a friend  
Like him whose hand thou'rt leaving,  
For, to thy numbers, none will lend  
An ear, so self-deceiving.

*Preface.*

---

No other eye will seek to see  
Thy beauty, not thy failing.  
If any do,—perchance 'twill be  
A quest of small availing.  
Yet if the world should quite neglect,  
Too busy far to heed thee,  
Bring back to me thy fortunes wrecked,  
And I, at least, shall read thee.

I have an attic, far aloft,—  
Thy fellows there may slumber.  
And them the dust in showers soft  
Will coat—with other lumber.  
If thou may have no readers,—then  
The joy of song's in singing;  
And thou wast born afar from men,  
Where many charms were springing;

And I was happy while I lay  
Where summery fields were gleaming,—  
By voiceful stream,—by thunderous bay,—  
A-dreaming still and dreaming.  
And all the gladness of those days  
While thou wast still a-making  
A peep between thy leaves will raise,  
When I am old and aching.





## A Christmas Sunset.

**H**OW calm, and fair and dream-like,  
The twilight fades away!

What hour on earth can seem like  
This ling'ring close of day!

I gaze, and one great thrill my heart suffuses  
Which, melting at the touch, its mean earth-bondage  
looses.

These hills, with tree-tops fringing,  
Stand up in solemn black,  
Upon the sky impinging,  
Where the last fading track

Of daylight ebbs, in colours faint and tender ;  
Save where one crimson bar still hints its vanished  
splendour.

The sands are dark and hazy,  
But on them slowly swing  
The ripples long and lazy  
Which with susurrance fling  
Soft tongues of silver light, the beach ascending,  
A restless line of glory, with murmuring unending.

The moon,—a crescent slender,  
Is high in heaven ; her light  
Floods the long seas with splendour,  
And myriad twinkles bright ;  
And over all,—earth, sky, and waters heaving,  
The peace of God descends, beyond the heart's  
believing.

Oh nature,—whispering ever,  
To-night most eloquent,  
I feel as if thy Giver  
Now o'er me kindly bent ;  
Though far he fills yon star-transcending distance,  
He seems to dwell to-night with my poor soul's existence.

And hark ! the silver singing  
Where wreathing wavelets fall.  
For lo ! the breeze is springing  
And gently ruffles all.  
Yet all is peace—a pure ethereal cadence—  
And earth is still a dream of sweetness, more than Eden's.

Oh ; touch of God's own essence,  
How soon, alas, thou'lt flee.  
I scarce shall leave this presence  
When thou wilt fade from me.

But oh! that I could, from this tranquil minute,  
So fill my soul with peace that nought else could  
    come in it.

It fades! Look how it passes!

    The last dim glow is fled.

The hills are gloom-wrought masses,

    And all the sea is dead,

Save where the moon, fresh glory gathering ever,

Bids yonder restless path with newer splendour  
    quiver.

Now homeward. All is over,

    And one more twilight's gone.

Oh! could my heart discover

    To what it leads us on.

Does it but lead to gloom like yon horizon?

Or does it lead to light, like that I fed my eyes on?



**A Pang Approaching.**

THERE'S dear old Mrs. Martin with her big and  
handsome son,

You can see them crossing slowly down the street,  
His ample stride he slackens to befit her little one,  
As he marches, looking downward at his feet.

But she, poor little lady, keeps her brown eyes fixed  
on him,

Throwing all their shining love-light on his face ;  
She could see him miles away, though her sight *is*  
growing dim.

'Tis her heart that hears the music of his pace.

Why, dear old little mother, there are many worthy  
sons :

And there have been sons as worthy, age on age.  
But, 'twere throwing words away, to match hers with  
other ones,

To her, the leading actor on life's stage.

Her first thought in the morning, and her latest  
thought at night ;

And well-nigh half of all the thoughts between.  
For she lives a sunny dream-life, unrevealed to  
mortal sight,

Woven out of what he is, and what has been.

She knows her George will marry ! He'll be happier  
so,—no doubt !

How proud she'll be upon his wedding-day !

And to find a girl to suit him, she has kept a sharp  
look-out.

But that girl is not yet made of mortal clay.

Now George has not been waiting till his mother  
made her choice,

For he seldom takes his evening walks alone.

Full well he knows the secret thrill of one sweet  
rippling voice,

And the twilight touch of lips against his own.

Why,—poor old simple lady!—while he's walking  
by your side

He is framing gentle words to tell it all.

Though he leaves it till to-morrow,—you're so happy  
in your pride,

Yet across your dream the shadows surely fall.

**When Life has Faded.**

WHAT though I shall not in the skies  
In selfish ease enjoy a throne,  
And hear far off the myriad moan  
Of endless-surgings agonies.

These were the dreams that held me first;  
But God draws no such savage line.  
We all have something of divine;—  
The best but little more than worst.

If life eternal waits for one,  
Then life eternal waits for all;

Not waking at a judgment call ;  
But life to loftier life will run.

It would not bring me anxious care,  
Though I believed as many think,  
That soul and brain together sink,  
Resolving to the things they were.

*This* world is bright. *This* life is sweet.  
We have no claim to any other.  
If earth shall fold us as a mother,  
While unfelt æons o'er us fleet ;

Though we no more grew cognisant  
Of time, or of the rolling spheres,  
Of man, and all his changing years :  
Unmoved by wish, untouched by want ;

Our thanks were due—our praise indeed—  
To Him who gave us life and light,  
That to a busy day, a night  
Of restful darkness should succeed.

Yes; that were well! And yet I feel  
That somewhere in Creation's plan  
A place has been reserved where man  
Shall know what sense could not reveal.

A place where these probation years,  
That seem to have a future goal,  
That never ripen quite the soul,  
Will open out in wider spheres.

I am content howe'er it be,  
Whether the soul in Paradise

Or in the void that silent lies,  
Shall find its rest ; 'tis rest for me.

But yet our human race will last,  
And earnest work with hand or brain  
Will lift it to a higher plane,  
And work will stand when we have passed.

And so the simple rule is best,  
To think not of our future place,  
But write our mark upon the race,  
And leave to God, in trust, the rest.

**The Birth of Nature.**

## I.

*In the beginning*

THAT space where planets course  
In their magnificently silent force,—  
That space which spreads afar  
Beyond the confines of the loneliest star,—  
That space, ineffably sublime, which runs  
Through mighty voids, from suns to endless suns,  
In the beginning lay in awful sleep;  
Wherein, of all these now bedazzling ones,  
There was no shape. But in a formless heap,  
Through which no thing that is did stir or creep,  
The universe lay spread from deep to mighty deep.



II.

Was chaos.

And darkness without end,  
One great mysterious blackness did extend,  
With not one ray redeemed,  
So that the whole as nothing might have seemed.  
For in that wide monotony which spread  
Of sullen vapours, chill, inert, and dead,  
There was no shape, nor sound, nor any motion,  
Nor bound, nor limit through the æons dread ;  
Nor change that might discern place, part, or  
portion.  
A lightning speed had yielded but the notion  
Of universal rest in that abysmal ocean.

III.

Whereof composed.

Yet small, and wondrous small,  
The atoms of that vapour spread through all.

A floating dust, a speck,  
Those pollen grains, which thigs of insects  
deck,  
Were mighty worlds compared with one of  
these ;

But they were scattered in infinities.

Eternity itself would fail to tell

The sum of their stupendous companies.

And though the vapour-mass at rest did dwell,

An ocean dead, without or wave or swell,

Yet did each atom range in paths invisible.

#### IV.

*Its primal energy.*

Their speed was as the rush

Of meteor flash through midnight's solemn hush.

And in that infinite maze,

With clash and impact endless, each its ways

Devious, disturbed, and ever broken found  
In infinite play of shock and sharp rebound.  
Yet each of them, with life and strength in it,  
Circled in mighty cycles, and around  
One wavering centre was constrained to flit  
In orbits winding, varying, intricate ;  
Yet ever circling on through changes infinite.

V.

Thus awful whirlpools rolled  
Of atoms in their myriad hosts untold ;  
Through wildernesses black,  
'Mid all-extending silence. But their track  
Through countless ages gathered fixity,  
And inward drawn by long and slow degree,  
Sucked to the centres of their spheres immense,  
Those atoms sped no longer singly free,

But bound in ties of mutual influence,  
In drops as of the finest quintessence,  
They whirled in vapour clouds that ever grew more  
dense.

## VI.

*The cosmic whirlpools.*

And all creation saw  
These mighty gulfs awhirl to one great law  
While fabulous ages crept,  
Unbroken darkness on their motion slept.  
But, drop on drop impinging, the quick play  
Of atoms made a dawning glimmer gray.  
It gleamed like silent lightning, like the glow  
On thunder clouds which, piling far away,  
Flashing, light up their rounded bosoms; so  
Electric streams at times lit up the flow  
Of tawny vapour clouds that ever round did go.

---

VII.

*A nucleus.*

This mighty vortex sphere  
Drew inward ever, to the centre near,—  
That centre wherein lay  
A refuge-spot from such stupendous play.  
There nestled calmness 'mid that wild unrest :  
A haven of stillness, deep within the breast  
Of gloom, and through the nameless ages there  
A nucleus orb was gathered and compressed.  
Half liquid, but with no discernment where  
It melted outward in the vaporous air.  
Yet moved it round upon its axis spinning fair.

VIII.

*Formerly our orb—the Sun.*

And inward still it drew  
The circumambient vapours, and it grew

Hot with impingent blow ;  
A molten mass of dimly ruddy glow,  
And ever as the ages rolled along  
More huge its bulk, its fiery glow more strong.  
And swifter grew its spinning, for there fell  
Oblique upon its bosom all the throng  
Of universal matter. Thus did swell  
Our glorious orb, the Sun ; and visible  
With that transcendent glow all things in light did  
dwell.

## IX.

A sea of molten glass,—  
Translucent fire seemed then that whirling  
mass.  
At every impulse new  
Fresh speed he gathered, and fresh heat he  
threw ;

Till urged to fury pace his surface boiled,  
And round his girth a mighty ridge was coiled.  
Was never sight like that red mountain vast ;  
As far beyond earth's ranges highest piled  
As plough-built furrows are by these surpassed.  
And, as it thundered on, its furnace blast  
A hundred million miles with fervent power was cast.

X.

*Flameth the solar ridge.*

Ah ! what can mortals know  
Of mighty scenes? In wondering awe we go  
Through gorge and dark ravine,—  
O'er peak and height of our own mountains mean.  
Oh ! had there been ;—oh ! had there been  
some sight  
That might have viewed those vales of ruddy  
light

Within whose hollow this great earth could lie  
Like dusky boulder in a sandy bight!  
Some eye to view those liquid mountains high  
As seems the moon in our terrestrial sky,  
What awful grandeur then must have appalled that  
eye!

## XI.

*Springeth forth Neptune.*

But who that lives would dare  
The wonders of that moment to declare,  
When, hurled with Titan force,  
A molten mount was thrown? It took its course  
Through realms of space, like stone by slinger  
slung;  
Huge as an hundred worlds, rushing, it sprung;  
And many a week it sped, and years were gone,  
Until upon the outer verge it hung,



Circling its silent orbit. There it shone  
Of all the planets first ; vast and alone  
In its majestic course it rolled for ages on.

XII.

*The Earth speedeth out into space.*

But as the centre, fed  
With matter that from out the vast was shed,  
Grew large again, and burned  
In flaming mounds that heaved and tossed and  
turned,  
So did its awful speed from age to age  
Spin out these mighty drops. Our heritage,  
This goodly Earth, sprang liquid from the side  
Of the all-parent sun. With belching rage  
Outward she leapt, heading towards the wide,  
The chill abyss ; and round her rolled a tide  
Of vapours, hissing hot, wherein her glow did hide.

## XIII.

And yet obliquely sent  
She felt an inward influence, and she bent,  
Nodding the while, and round  
Her parent orb a spiral path she wound.  
And centuries rolled by, while still she spread  
Outward her giant circles, and she led  
Ten thousand leagues of vapour in a trail  
That whirled in mighty quivers as she sped;  
In shape a sickle, like the glittering tail  
Of comets dire, whereat the faces pale  
Of desert tribes and those that set the lonely sail.

## XIV.

*The Moon hath birth.*

So sprang our mother earth!  
Nor living eye beheld the awful birth.  
Her spiral path she traced

Till forces poised. Then, in the cosmic waste,  
She found her ultimate path, whereon she  
rolled,

Measuring her orbit out a myriad-fold;—

A molten globe of like translucent sheen

As glows in crucibles of liquid gold.

Oh! what a wondrous thing this world hath  
been!

And when she tossed the moon to roll between,

There is no thought can frame the thunders of the  
scene.

XV.

*The Earth cooleth.*

Ah me! to think, to dream

What ages passed in uneventful stream!

While earth her daily spin,

The moon her monthly circuit made, and in

Twelve moons they two, with awful tread, the  
year  
Marked out unconscious. As they rolled, each  
sphere  
Scattered its heat. The earth grew cool, and  
made  
A solid skin of wrinkled rocks and sere.  
Yet such the fervent powers that inward played,  
A thousand times they burst the bondage laid,  
And fiery lava streams through horrid prospects  
strayed.

## XVI.

*The rain falleth.*

A million lives of men  
Were all too brief a time to measure when  
At last a solid floor,  
Too thick, too rigid to be shattered more,

Compassed the earth; yet hot as lava flow  
That hath devoured whole villages below  
Not two days past; so scorching hot it lay.

And when at length there fell, all soft and  
slow,

The gentle rains from out the bosom gray  
Of that o'er-shadowing cloud, they hissed away  
In wreathing steam again; no drop on it might stay.

XVII.

And far spread the seas.

But still it cooled, while years  
Rolled by in mighty cycles; then these tears  
Refreshed its parched face,  
And in the hollows found a resting place.  
Thus, ever gathering, did the deluge pour  
In age-long showers with deep and sullen  
roar,

Till, all in shining waters clothed, the world  
Was one ensphering ocean. Evermore  
Her shallow seas grew deep ; their faces curled  
To winds that from the firmament were hurled,  
And a great tide around her mighty waist was  
whirled.

## XVIII.

So did she spin, and day,  
Alternate with a brooding darkness, lay  
Upon her billowy breast.  
And round her whole circumference the crest  
Of waves that met no obstacle rolled on.  
But tepid all, and through the waters shone  
At times the fires internal, when the shell  
By rents was torn. Ah ! then, from zone to zone,  
Then fierce convulsions raged, and terrible

The thunderous shocks when that deep molten  
hell  
Received the brimming waves that down its caverns  
fell.

XIX.

And up, a hundred leagues,  
There flew exploded masses, like the peaks  
In size of Caucasus;  
And thence again, a covering vaporous  
Floated around the world, to lie and brood  
In awful twilight on the heaving flood.  
And sounds portentous, bellowing loud and deep,  
Scattered and burst beneath the dusky shroud,  
Then rumbling died, and left the unmeasured sleep  
Of ages to enfold the watery heap,  
Wherein no sound was heard but the lone billows'  
leap.

## XX.

*Then riseth the dry land.*

In many a conflict dread  
The sea in parts revealed its rocky bed.  
And dry land—ah! how old,  
Wrinkled, and bare, and black—raised up its bold  
And horrid peaks to stem the onward course  
Of rushing waves; but these, with liquid force,  
Hurled on the shores the wrecks of earthquake-  
    shock,  
And dashed them headlong in their thunders  
    hoarse ;  
Till many a cliff was crumbled, many a rock  
To sands resolved, for there was nought could mock  
The sea's persistent roll, or its long labours baulk.

## XXI.

The toiling waters laid  
Deep on their floors the havoc that they made.



---

And a soft fringe was wrought  
To beetling cliffs,—those beaches, where the  
hot  
And steaming billows crashed, and made a roar  
Roll up reverberant from shore to shore.  
Still from the vaporous firmament the rains  
Descended, and the rocky dry land bore  
Terrific torrents, earth's magnificent veins,  
Sweeping with turbulent whiteness o'er the plains  
Of blackened lava, through grim desolation's reigns.

XXII.

*The wrecks of time.*

In the vast cycles slow,  
Of years unnumbered did those torrents flow,  
Of waters mightier far  
Than broadest-bosomed of the streams that are.

Rolling their boulders down, they fiercely smote  
 The jutting crags and buttresses; their note  
 Thundrous boomed up among those mountains  
 wild.

But soft in ocean's depths, still, dark, remote,  
 The wreck they bore of continents was piled;—  
 Pebbles, and sand, and clay, with rust defiled,  
 Till mighty strata rose in ocean's breast enisled.

## XXIII.

*Build up mighty strata.*

Yet not without the shock  
 They rose, that rent and burst the solid rock,  
 Dislodging mighty beds,  
 Casting them up in mountain peaks, whose  
 heads  
 Were lost in vapour clouds, which hissing came  
 Whence combat raged of mingling sea and flame.

Then, soon as peace returned to brood once  
more,  
Through the long centuries, the wave, the  
stream,  
Inch upon inch, laid out that sandy floor,  
And what the fires threw up the waters wore,  
And filled the hollow seas with sediments they bore.

XXIV.

And life appeareth.

Thus came a wondrous change ;  
No more the lava rock, the adamant range ;  
But softly rounded forms  
Of sandstone, modelled by ten thousand storms,  
While still in myriads passed the ages ; still  
The earth grew cool, the waters cold, until,  
Their cataclysmic childhood far outgrown,  
To lowly life they first were suitable.

Yet whence it came, and whence its germs were  
    thrown,  
Whether it sprang from inborn powers alone,  
Ah ! who will tell of all whose hearts the mystery own !

## XXV.

Yet whencesoever sprung  
The lowly life that clothed our earth, and clung,  
    A mould, a film of green,  
'Twas wondrous above all the years had seen.  
For every cell that floated soft amid  
Her sister cells, within her bosom hid  
The secret power of progeny ; it grew,  
    Conceived, and swelled, and cast its tiny bud,  
To live the course itself had circled through.  
Thus earth grew green ; the genial waters, too,  
With living things were thronged that died, yet  
    sprung anew.

---

XXVI.

And slowly ascendeth,

But now, more wondrous still,  
The change when all the outer earth grew chill.  
Its heat dispelled afar  
To cosmic regions of the abysmal star.  
Then for its warmth it drank the flooding sun,  
And daily turned its breast to feel him. None  
Of all its lands but sometimes met his rays.  
And yet, while earth was nodding, as it spun,  
One pole swung inward to the fervid blaze.  
The other outward turned its chilly gaze,  
And there the nights grew long, with cold and  
desolate days.

XXVII.

Through stress of cold.

But slow, with creeping pace,  
That polar winter came, and though the race

Of lowly things was doomed,  
And myriads perished, yet wherever bloomed  
One stouter than his fellows, he was spared  
To propagate his kind; yet ever fared  
New generations as the last; they died,

But left the heroes of their tribes, who reared  
Their slowly changing broods; thus, through the  
tide

Of myriad years, with change they change defied;  
And, gathering powers, they spread of aspect  
multiplied.

## XXVIII.

*Through stress of heat.*

But elsewhere on the earth  
New forms of life from sunshine took their birth;  
For as its fervour killed  
The weaklings, so fresh forms arose and filled

The tropic seas and sweltering lands. The change  
Of warmth and moisture, and the endless range  
That death and boundless generation brought,  
Built up in humble creatures aspect strange.  
Then lowly animals subsistence sought  
On lowlier plants. Among themselves they fought,  
Till land and ocean were with one great struggle  
fraught.

XXIX.

*The vital conflict*

And from that world-wide strife  
There sprang the order of ascending life.  
Ill fared the weaker kind  
That in fresh change fresh refuge failed to find ;  
If that the stress of time and strife and place  
Pressed slowly harder on its hapless race.  
For some were famished ; some for ages fed  
The maws of fiercer forms, till from the face

Of earth the few survivors vanish'd.  
And many a tribe was numbered with the dead,  
While altered types emerged to conquer and to  
spread.

## XXX.

*Breeds new races;*

Some clothed their pulpy forms  
In shells that bade defiance to the storms  
And hungry foes; and some  
With thorny spines were circled; some their home  
Made in the bosom of the sheltering soil.  
A thousand arts, a thousand shields, to foil  
The fierce marauders, grew with numberless years.  
A thousand arms to pierce, to rend, to spoil,  
The victors wielded; wings and eyes and ears  
In shapes primeval came as ministers,—  
To these, to seize their prey; to those, to shun their  
fears.



---

XXXI.

Which perish;

They grew, they sported, each  
After its kind, on land or wave or beach.

They died and left their shells,  
Their spikes, their spines, and thorny tentacles  
To strew the floors of ocean. Over these  
The soft showers fell from turbid gulfs and seas ;  
And earth became a sepulchre, its crust  
Built up of many a myriad histories,  
Though myriads more were crumbled, dust to dust.  
Then the great fires infernal boiled and thrust  
The relic-sprinkled rocks in ranges lordliest.

XXXII.

Or, in slow degree,

How slow ! how slow it crept !  
That upward march of life ; and oft it slept.  
For suns arose and set,  
And balmy days passed by, or cold or wet ;

And time was meted, long as that unrolled  
Unto our days from Pharaoh reigns of old,  
And yet too short such epochs were for aught  
Of evident change that could by sight be told.  
And, as it seemed, each living thing begot  
Its perfect image ; yet the change was wrought,  
Though in the mighty tale ten thousand years were  
nought.

## XXXIII.

*Become transformed*

And dry land changed to sea,  
And sea to dry land, each in slow degree ;  
And creatures that erstwhile  
Had roved afar,—now prisoned on some isle  
Which ever shrank,—hard pressed, with altered  
shapes,  
Struggled for life on fast submerging capes.

---

Some, that upon the watery margin fed  
Through ages long, their limbs transformed,  
perhaps,  
To membraned fins, across the billows fled ;  
Others, with limbs in feathery lightness spread,  
Fluttered from dwindling isles, where soon their race  
lay dead.

XXXIV.

And elsewhere seas withdrew,  
And slender tribes grew populous anew ;  
And mighty lakes were dried  
Inch after inch, till all their inmates died,  
Save where some hardier form perchance had  
grown,  
To walk the land and drink the air alone.  
Thus did the earth at every age-long swing,  
Bidding alternate zone exchange with zone,

Now frozen deep, in heat now sweltering,  
With mighty pressure on each living thing,  
Bid form on form arise and race from race outspring.

## XXXV.

*Into earth's adornment.*

And earth was clothed sweet  
In gracious flowers. Here in the silent heat  
The gorgeous chalice spread.  
There, from the snowdrift, peeped a modest head;  
And forests threw on high their rustling crests,  
And folded twilight in their spacious breasts.  
The thicket blossomed; meadows deep in grass  
Made grateful home for throngs of busy guests.  
Here hummed the bee; there did the beetle pass;  
And things that flit on wings of veined glass  
Sailed through the dreamy air, or poised in cloud-  
like mass.

---

XXXVI.

The age of coal.

The steaming delta plain

Grew dense with broad-leafed jungles, where  
the rain

Rolled in from summer seas.

There tree-ferns waved, in height as stately trees ;  
Their mighty fronds in graceful measure swayed  
O'er leagues of gloom their own luxuriance made ;

And ever fell their trunks of hairy brown

In wild entanglement and ruin laid,—

A fragrant mould, whence sprang anew the crown  
Of star-like fronds up to the sunlight thrown ;

And many a thousand years the earth was deeply  
strewn.

XXXVII.

Then lithe, and grim, and dark

Prowled, through the waters, the devouring shark ;

And in their direful need,  
The lone survivors of his ravenous greed  
Grew swift and fearful; and the scaly race  
Of smooth proportions seemed, and supple grace.  
Then came great lizard monsters; and huge frogs,  
In size as oxen, bellowed their deep bass  
Where giant marsh-plants sprang from ponds and  
bogs,  
And pines of antique aspect left their logs  
To moulder half afloat, through drizzling mists and  
fogs.

## XXXVIII.

What are all histories told  
To that gigantic tale which rolled and rolled  
In slow development  
While generations came, and bloomed, and went?  
How many a million dawns rose sweet and fair?

How many a million days made mild the air?  
How many a million twilights dipped to gloom?  
And nought to mark them, save that every-  
where  
Life with ecstatic thrill awoke to bloom  
In new-born bliss, then passed into its doom;  
While earth of mighty hosts was mother both and  
tomb.

XXXIX.

*The mighty stream of life.*

Behold yon little hill,  
Chambered and galleried with art and skill;  
There, in their busy swarms,  
The ants are toiling. Lo! their zealous forms  
Wondrously nerved! How many a thousand  
dwell  
Beneath that mound in passage, hall, and cell;

Yet is their city one of myriads more.

They perish, and new generations swell  
To toil and pass away. So, on the shore,  
Unnumbered drops in endless billows pour,—  
Yet who may tell how once they built a breaker's  
    roar!

XL.

Here, clad in plated scales,  
The whip-tongued eater of the ants assails  
    Their sandy fortress. Deep  
They learn to burrow in their mazy keep.  
Longer and sharper grow his scooping claws;  
Ten thousand creatures through his toothless  
    jaws  
Pass to destruction to provide a meal.  
A hundred millions lose their lives because  
His body must grow fat; a common weal



Of beings, wondrous-planned to think and feel,  
Are blotted at one swoop for all their busy zeal.

XLi.

*Insect-eaters.*

Fresh multitudes arise  
Of novel forms to seize the insect prize,—  
To rend, to cut, to tear,  
To draw the trembler from its inmost lair.  
And tribes as populous as the teeming East  
Is populous with men, are born to feast  
The shrew, the hedgehog, mole, or porcupine ;  
And these, in time, but feed some mightier  
beast.  
Yonder, through air, there sail in tortuous line  
The swan-necked dragons. When these monsters  
dine  
Whole tribes of lovely things their being must resign.

## XLII.

The saurian world.

That mighty lizard brood  
Is rampant upon sea, and shore, and wood,  
To gorge, and rend, and wreck.  
Some flit on giant wings, with arching neck ;  
Their strength like crocodiles', like bats' their flight ;  
And squeaking things crouch low when high in  
sight,  
On outstretched clouds they poise. Some on the  
tide,  
Where sandy shoals reflect a greenish light,  
With head raised high on curving stem, abide.  
Some through the deep sea-wave in fury ride,  
And their huge serried jaws scatter destruction wide.

## XLIII.

Thus evermore are born  
Sweet things of beauty, to be crushed and torn.

The quivering, nervous thread,  
In wondrous knots, in delicate branches spread,  
The marvel-working brain, the silky wing,  
The meek brown eye, that soft translucent  
    spring,  
Pass in long streams to fill the hungry maw ;  
    Fermenting there, and foully festering,  
They change to formless mud. Such is the law  
That rules through all. The monster long may  
    awe  
The lesser broods, yet he at length feeds some red  
    jaw.

XLIV.

*The marsupials.*

But from the strife there springs  
Maternal care,—that first of nobler things.  
    And a few scanty young,—  
From eggs in myriads now no longer sprung,—

Make the full hope of races. Soft, and warm,  
And jelly-bright they reach this world of storm.  
Then, in her pouch, the mother lays them, where  
They nestle at her nipples, gathering form.  
Keen-eared, keen-eyed, she sniffs the tell-tale air,  
And bounding, bears her brood from every scare,  
Till, strong and fleet of foot, emerge her tender  
care.

## XLV.

Apparently Pity.

Then first arose on earth  
The law of pity; for each feeble birth  
Deepened a tenderer tone  
That echoed first in female hearts alone.  
Yet, thence transmitted, found a varying place  
In all the heirs of each ascending race.  
Yet long the process, for the primal care  
Was self-preserving, and the pardoning grace

In hungry might availed alone to spare  
The creature's kindred. Death was everywhere  
The needful prop of life ; and mercy weak and rare.

XLVI.

*The pachyderms.*

But still the ages passed ;  
Day following day in deep successions vast.  
The Spring-time brought its flowers ;  
Summer its fruits. Through long-forgotten hours  
The Autumn murmured in those far-off days,  
And Winter gloomed in snow and fog and haze.  
Then on the prairies fled the fleet gazelle,  
And cropped the fragrant blooms. In marshy  
bays  
Of sunny lakes, till the swift evening fell,  
The tapirs wallowed ; while innumerable  
The hosts of swine-like things thronged the deep  
forest dell.

## XLVII.

*The flesh-eaters.*

And ever that mighty dream  
Of slipping ages,—that stupendous stream  
Of centuries sped, and not  
One century but some subtle change was  
wrought.  
Then came the tiger and the leopard bright.  
The manëd lion, at the fall of night,  
Lay watching by those moonlit rivers old  
To whet with blood his three days' appetite.  
He sprang with roars that struck his victim cold.  
Alas! the haunch that felt his thunderous hold!  
Over its crunching bones the spoiler crouched and  
growled.

## XLVIII.

The wolf, the jackal kind,  
Howled over midnight wastes. The moving wind

In hush of ages back  
Carried the babbling yelp of many a pack.  
The otter dived in every lonely place ;  
Weasel, and stoat, and ermine, and the race  
Of shuffling bears with slow intrusion crept  
To force their way upon earth's crowded face.  
While many a form primeval failed, and slept  
In unredeemed oblivion; many swept  
So that not even the rocks their faint impression  
kept.

XLIX.

Through leafy forests crashed  
The ponderous-trooping elephant, and splashed  
With shrilly notes beside  
The reedy marge of some full-volumed tide.  
Here the shy camel on the desert housed ;  
The llama there on scraggy mountains browsed.

Far on the rolling sea the lubbering whale  
Spouted and plunged. Seals in their concourse  
roused  
The echoing cliffs of rock or iceberg pale,  
Or on some shelving beach of slippery shale,  
Suckling their clumsy calves, barked to the passing  
gale.

L.

*Four-handed tribes.*

The bright-eyed lemur skips  
With soft four-handed movement to the tips  
Of rustling branches. Long  
His various species through the forests throng.  
From him developed slow the monkey tribe,  
That sportive world of romp, and jest, and  
jibe.  
With them came sympathy, the fond caress,  
The pitying look, the softly proffered bribe;



And spite of jars, a wealth of tenderness.  
Where tropic selvas reared their vast recess  
They held the topmost boughs in nations numberless.

LI.

The apes

Then of their various shapes  
In tangled forests grew the man-like apes.  
Long-armed, from bough to bough  
They swung. Lo, underneath that ridgy brow,  
The light of cunning from their glances shed!  
On leafy stages, where the branches spread,  
They reared their hairy youngsters; at the breast  
Suckled with loving care, the burrowing head  
By tender fingers stroked and soothed and pressed.  
Their chattering families spent on arboured nest  
Many a long-gone day, and passed to boundless  
rest.

## LII.

*The advent of Man.*

And last of all came man,  
 Who for a time should cope the age-long plan;  
 Till in the cosmic swell,—  
 That tide of time and change invisible,—  
 He pass to rest as other types have passed,  
 Leaving an imprint in the record vast.  
 But chief in those new forms of nobler frame,—  
 His sons, his heirs, sprung from his race, but  
 classed,  
 As he from apes, apart; with prouder name,  
 Alike in much, in much perchance the same,  
 Yet of such altered mould as loftier rank may claim.

## LIII.

*Reason groweth.*

Slowly arose the dawn  
 Of man's primeval reason; yet there shone

Beneath those shaggy brows  
Some gleams of that fine spirit that should house  
Within his rounded temples. Embryo mind  
Bequeathed had been through many a lowlier  
kind ;  
Through dog and bear, through ape and elephant,  
Emerging from the mists of instinct blind.  
But reason now, though vague at first and scant,  
Gave speech to man, a genius ministrant,  
Beneath whose magic spell his race grew dominant.

## LIV.

For mind to mind lent force,  
Oft as they wove reciprocal discourse.  
And each absorbing each,  
They grew, and made to grow with mutual  
specch.  
Thus came the intercourse of wants and fears ;

And thence inventions : clubs and swords  
and spears ;

The bow, the feathered arrow ;—lo ! the fire !

The rude canoe ! and thus, with passing years,  
Fresh triumph showed the way to fresh desire.

did new needs new artifice inspire,  
And every conquest raised his powers to regions  
higher.

LV.

*And man ascendeth.*

In the incessant strife

Of tribe with tribe, for room, for food, for life,  
'Twas intellect prevailed.

The brutish dwindled and their kindred failed.

O'er conquered lands the victor roved and taught

The beasts to bow before his cunning thought.

The ox, the horse, the elephant were pressed

To do him service ;—reared, and sold, and  
bought,  
Slaughtered, or trained, or shorn as pleased him  
best.

Nay, man his vanquished fellow-men possessed,  
And slavery lent to earth leisure and learned quest.

LVI.

*And civilization dawneth.*

Behold the Assyrian,  
Where those two mighty Eastern rivers run.  
Lo! how his sweltering slaves  
Achieve the wonders that his fancy craves!  
For mind o'er body triumphs, and he sees  
His temples rise, column and sculptured frieze.  
And with them science springs, and all the arts  
Of peace and warfare grow by slow degrees.  
Then spreads the city, and then hum its marts.

The state, combined of interaiding parts,  
 Gives man a giant's power, and new-found force  
 exerts.

## LVII.

And morality.

All hail, thy genial sway!

Thou fount of comfort—social sympathy!

Sweet nurse that taught the mind,

The infant heart of man, still unrefined,

Still rough and harsh, to deem more pleasing fair

The courteous word, the kind and gracious air,

Than strength of thews and terror of advance.

The city street was thy peculiar care;

And there thou showed'st thy comeliest  
 countenance.

How much, with helpful word and welcoming  
 glance,

Didst thou man's intellect both sweeten and enhance!

LVIII.

'Twas thou didst nurture first  
Within his soul that sweetly mournful thirst  
Which made his bosom yearn  
For mystic knowledge. Much he longed to learn  
The whence he came, the whereunto he drifted ;  
What power it was the mighty hills that lifted ;  
What raised the cedar from its feathery seed.  
And much he sought to know how earth was  
gifted  
With murmuring streams, and flowers and clovered  
mead,  
Yet none the record of the rocks might read ;  
And answer came there none responsive to his need.

LIX.

And religion.

Therefore did fancy roll  
Her wreathing films of poesy. A soul

Men saw in everything.

The falling stone, the wind, the bubbling spring,

The rustling tree, the softly opening flower,—

Each moved with joyance of its inward power.

The deep stream held its soul, whereby it flowed ;

The mountain top would gleam, or veil, or lower,

As willed the spirit which therein abode ;

And in the sun resplendently there rode

That spirit which their hearts confessed the highest  
god.

LX.

They thrilled with awe and wonder,

Hearing the sky speak in its solemn thunder.

They saw its ardent blaze

From out the mud their vital rice crops raise ;

And as their souls were touched to deeper  
chords,



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They folded hymns of mystery in words,  
That made the budding powers of art expand,  
Chanting the honours of wide-working lords.  
The temple grew beneath their fashioning hand,—  
At first a dream, but with achievement grand,  
And stately things arose in reverence through the  
land.

LXI.

*Civilization extendeth eastward,*

Then eastward rolled the springs  
Of trickling knowledge to those gatherings  
Of swarthy men that lay  
Where tawny Ganges holds its fervid way.  
Whether borne onward with the conqueror's  
spear,  
Or with the merchant's traffic year by year,  
Knowledge through India long was multiplied,

Till Rama reigned,—a crowned philosopher.  
 Still eastward borne, through populous regions  
     wide,  
 The arts of peace on China poured their tide,  
 And hordes of barbarous men thereby were dignified.

## LXII.

And westward,

And westward, where the Nile  
 Wins from the desert glare, one strip to smile,  
     Thither the conquerors bore  
 Their nursling science, and great multitudes  
     wore  
 That air of calm and ordered industry  
 Whence men derive their full supremacy.  
 Sesostris then, and Rameses, and the proud  
     Unknown beneath the pyramids who lie,—  
 Each in the narrow patch that death allowed,—

Built up their centuries ; then, reluctant, bowed  
Their heads to brainless rest and the thick mummy  
shroud.

LXIII.

*Into Europe.*

And Egypt gave to Greece

Those arts which there found manifold increase.

And Greece bequeathed to Rome

The precious charge which thence found  
kindliest home

With Arab caliphs and their alchemists,

While a deep gloom on Europe lay, and mists  
Of deadening darkness on its lands abode.

Until, restored by priests, or spite of priests,

In Italy, in Spain, in France there glowed

By turns that light whence truth and progress  
flowed ;

Then from its English shrine its fullest lustre showed.

## LXIV.

And earnest sons of hers,—  
 Artisans, sailors, poets, philosophers,—  
 Workers with hand and brain,—  
 Deepened the souls or raised the lives of men.  
 And lo! the triumphs human thought hath won  
 On German soil, where many a worthy son  
 Of genius spends a life's long years to find  
 Some thread of truth that may through nature run!  
 And thou, America! of all thy kind  
 The youngest, round thy name hast early twined  
 Great feats that warm our souls, proud victories of  
 the mind.

## LXV.

*Man's triumphs.*

Behold, in each of these,  
 What mind hath done! Look on the boisterous  
 seas!

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What floating things they bear,  
Breasting the waves, of giant might, yet fair!  
The ships are these, wherein, secure, men ride  
O'er all the ocean, and its awful tide  
They measure careless. And the lands are lined  
With iron tracks. Lo! snow-white yonder glide  
The wreathing curves of steam, where swift as  
the wind  
The locomotives rush, with might confined,  
While rattling waggons speed and thunder on behind.

LXVI.

Man's lightning messages  
Flash over land and under stormy seas,  
And through the aërial wire  
Afar he speaks; and from the furnace fire  
He shapes of might or beauty wondrous things.  
And hark! from organ pipe or chorded strings

The notes divine he fashions! See his thought  
 Of loveliness, those sweet imaginings  
 On canvas to the thrill of spirit wrought!  
 And from his soul of souls the echoes brought  
 Of deep abysmal tones from poet-phrases caught!

## LXVII.

*His glorious future.*

Such is the power of art,  
 When man with man conjoins, and each his part  
 Bears in some nation's course!  
 What then shall be the irresistible force  
 When nations join as one, and all the earth  
 Holds one republic? When, in rank, or birth,—  
 In tongue,—religion,—laws,—no difference lies  
 To sever worth from world-wide brother worth.  
 Far as the nomad unit tribes did rise  
 Welded in nations, so their destinies  
 Shall upward grow when earth one nation shall comprise

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LXVIII.

Then shall the reign begin—  
Far, far adown the centuries,—wherein  
Man shall with true control  
Bridle all Nature's might and his own soul.  
Ah! how remote it seems,—that glorious fate,  
A world thick-peopled in fraternal state,  
With many a giant force to be its slave!

What prodigies shall rise! What cities great  
Spread by each river and each land-locked wave!  
There shall the millions hive, and toil, and save;  
Still build, still breed their kind, still pass into the  
grave.

LXIX.

*His vanishment.*

For, still the tale is death!  
Death is the sum of all that history saith.

And death will be the sum  
Of days that are, of all the days to come.  
The deaths of beings and the deaths of races.  
A few, perchance, may leave awhile their traces ;  
Yet, in the cosmic epochs, these must pass.  
Give Time but time enough and he effaces  
Sooner or later all that is or was.  
The earth and all the story that it has  
Shall be a meteor streak—to gleam—and fade, alas !

## LXX.

For earth herself must die !  
Though not perchance till man hath lifted high  
His powers, and learnt to wrest  
Triumphs that now lie dark and all unguessed.  
Not till, perchance, his growing skill hath read  
Full many a secret that with mystery dread



Now lures our souls. Not till his distant sons  
May walk the earth in all things perfected,  
Ten times as far beyond our noblest ones  
As Shakspeare and our lordliest paragons  
Are lifted high above the Patagonians.

LXXI.

*The death of the world.*

But thou, oh Earth!—but thou  
That spreadest thy rich verdure round me now,  
Home of hearts warm and bold,  
Shalt one day lie inert and grey and cold!  
Oh! may that time be long, thou dear abode,  
Ere from thy breast the vital warmth hath  
flowed!

Methinks those last thin stragglers I behold,—  
Heirs of a mighty intellect,—but bowed,  
They as their fathers were, in combats old

With deepening chill, while freezing centuries  
 rolled ;  
 They hapless, man by man, relax their shivering  
 hold!

## LXXII.

Its ghost.

Then shall the lowliest race  
 That, spite of chill, on earth may keep its place,  
 Then shall the forest tree,  
 The shrub, the flower, the grass fade utterly !  
 Then only, in some crevice haply hid,  
 The mossy mould will bloom unvisited !  
 Last, shall that lingering life fade evermore,  
 And the great seas, bound in their icy lid,  
 Display no more their moving might, but hoar,  
 A snow-clad ocean round a snow-clad shore,  
 Shall spread one white expanse the wide world o'er  
 and o'er !

---

LXXIII.

Oh! heart of mine be still,  
And faint not at the awful spectacle!  
Alas! well might we quail  
Before that whirling death, that spectre pale,  
That ghost enwrapt in awful cerements white,  
Which once with life was pulsing fresh and  
bright!

What awful gulfs of ages it shall speed  
Around a sun grown faint in withering night!  
And shall it turn, without one mind to read  
The mystery of the stars? Must all indeed  
Revolve eternally, yet none be there to heed?

LXXIV.

*The abyss of the future.*

Shall all these heavenly things  
Move on unseen for ever in their rings?

Shall earth for ever spin  
And no one know the lives that passed therein?  
Shall all the universe still spread afar,—  
Planet on planet, star on boundless star,—  
Spheres and attendant spheres, all circling fair,—  
Yet none exist to know that such things are?  
Surely the universe is not so bare,  
So naked, poor, and paltry! Surely there  
Some soul doth habit! Else, what riddle strange  
it were.

## LXXV.

Things visible, yet none  
To see them while the infinite ages run!  
Things audible, and still  
No ear to drink the rich harmonious thrill!  
Things fair to reason, and no reason found  
To know their fairness in the measureless round!

---

Things lustrous with a beauty that shall speak,  
Star answering star, through space that hath  
no bound,  
And yet no soul to feel it! Oh! thou weak  
Heart that within me honestly would seek  
To grasp such thought,—forbear! nor dream such  
empty freak!

LXXVI.

*The mystery of the universe*

Deep underneath the whole  
There rests,—there surely rests some conscious  
soul,  
Whose mystic influence laid  
That early train wherewith the world was made.  
The Earth, and all her marvels, passing fair!  
This beauty sweet, her mantle everywhere!  
And all her creatures!—man, her transient guest,

His works and loftiest aims! Enclosed they were  
 In some deep germinal thought within the breast  
 Of that eternal power, unknown, unguessed,  
 Whereon the ordered paths of countless planets rest.

## LXXVIII.

*Its soul,*

In that last faith content,  
 Oh! heart, repose : though deep entanglement  
 Enfold thy feeble thought,  
 Stumbling through regions that it knoweth not.  
 Though blackness brood on that dread mystery  
 Of what at first hath been, of what shall be  
 When time shall sate at last his vast desire ;  
 Though compassless thou drift upon a sea  
 Of wide unfathomables, still the fire  
 Of that faint star shall shine through darkness dire  
 To steady still thy course which, ignorant else,  
 would tire.

---

LXXIX.

That needs must be unknown.

For oh! my heart, I bow  
In inexpressible sadness when, as now,  
I feel the littleness  
Of all I know, of all I faintly guess,  
And see the knowledge that extends, how far!  
Sweeping through space beyond the utmost star.  
Oh! heart, beat low, and school thyself to feel  
How very near us lies that fatal bar  
Across whose bounds no thought can e'er reveal  
Even the things that close around may fill,  
Unknown to sense, the great expanse invisible.

LXXX.

And man!

Five various senses we  
The gateways of our knowledge take to be.

Alas! They are but one!—

But one in kind the sensuous thrills that run  
Through nerves to conscious brain; and oh!  
my heart,

Let not this thought from out thy view depart:  
How much may be which presses close around,  
Yet finds no entrance in at any part!  
Which is,—yet gives nor sight, nor touch, nor  
sound!

Bethink thee well how near thee may abound  
The mustering forms of things no human sense hath  
found.

LXXXI.

Alas, how feeble!

Then rest content in awe;  
Delight thyself in fathoming law on law!  
Drink heartily thy share  
Of all that science wins with creeping care,



But sometimes pausing, from the deeps recall  
How petty is the sum, how poor, how small!  
Speed forth thy thought for one mysterious hour  
Through the stupendous gloom enfolding all.  
So shall distrust arise of thine own power;—  
No craven fear to make thee quail and cower,  
But manly awe that thrills to feel the darkness lower.

LXXXII.

Yet not without his trust.

Yet trust that, though thy sight  
Can see it not, a power exists whose might  
Hath made and keepeth still  
All things that are. Thou Earth, although the  
chill  
Whiten thy breast, and desolate though thou roll  
Down the vast tracts eternal, yet a soul,  
Whose silent speech is this great universe,

Hath planned thy course with all-foreseen  
control.

That soul shall smite thee with no withering curse ;  
But in some cosmic scheme no thought can pierce,  
Thine atomy part shalt thou with myriads more  
rehearse.

---

**A Spring Morning.**

THE Spring's first breath is upon my cheek ;

Its carols are in my ear ;

Its rustling leaves around me speak

The music I've longed to hear.

Those whispers of joy, of gentle peace,

That sweep all care from the heart ;

That bid the throb of the temples cease,

And the restless longings depart.

Now grieve I no more at the common lot,—

How all who live must die ;

The deep, dark, currents of being,—forgot

In the breeze's wakening sigh.

For, sad and troubled, I long had thought  
    Upon things that will never be known ;  
And my brain was weary, my temples hot,  
    With the feverful weeks that were flown.

Now here, by the wattle bloom silently laid,  
    Life seems like a rapturous dream ;  
And I lazily watch in the tremulous glade  
    How the sun-showers flicker and gleam.  
For the world is gracious and fragrant and bright,  
    And the open air smells sweet ;  
And the trees, in a flutter of fresh delight,  
    Respond to the thrill of the heat.

Oh ! fair is thy face, Mother Earth, and warm  
    Are the sunbeams that fall on thy breast !  
And why should I shudder to lay my form  
    In thy kindly embraces to rest ?

For the trees will wave, and the sunbeams fall,  
And the grass grow green and high,  
And the flowers will bloom, and the sweet  
birds call,  
When deep in thy bosom I lie.

**The Empire of Our Queen.**

WHEREVER spreads the rolling day  
That round our planet sweeps its way,  
On lonely wave or teeming ground,  
There will some Englishman be found.

And where an Englishman may be,  
On distant soil, on heaving sea,  
Where'er an Englishman is seen,  
There is the Empire of our Queen.

Not fertile lands, not cities great,  
Build up the measure of her state;  
It throbs in every British heart  
Throughout the earth's remotest part.

For in her name we symbolise  
The law-shaped life, the sweet home ties,  
Wherein we daily learn to trace  
The future promise of our race.

**An Orchestral Symphony.**

FORTH from the silence grows a tremulous note.

The air with vague suggestiveness is stirred;—  
Confused, yet sweet : delicious, though remote ;

As when far inland murmurings are heard  
Of seas that on a shingly beach are thrown ;

Or like the sound when many a mellow bird  
Makes distant music by some river-brim,

Waking the day with rich tumultuous hymn,

And trills that fluttering float  
Through open casements, soft, subdued, and dim.

And oh ! the sweetness gurgling from each  
throat,

To blend in that rich interwoven tone,



---

Till morning dreamers wake and all its rapture  
own!

So swells the rich confusion, interlaced  
With brief melodious turns and glad foretaste  
Of tunefulness to be,  
That from the maze shall swell, bright, flowing, free,  
Like Aphrodité from a rhythmic sea.

Hark to the beat of multitudinous wings!  
Their fluttering fills the air with gladsome quiver,  
Till, at a chord whereto the whole heart springs  
In one delicious shiver,  
The harmony dissolves with touch profound,  
And wanders, on the deftly woven strings,  
A world of mazy sound  
That stirs within the soul some lion-might  
We knew not slumbered there.  
Great glimpses pass, and struggling blindly, tear

The breast with thoughts that own no human  
name.

Sweet sounds that melt my frame !

How secret is the magic power ye claim !

For in the rich transition of your keys,—

Harmonious mysteries,

Ye mould my inmost being at your ease.

But hush ! a change is near !

Methinks a princess comes !

Those drowsy notes I hear

Are of the throng that hums

Attendant where she moves with cadenced feet.

She enters, and the drums

Roll out their turbulent tones ; they crash and fleet

In billowy throbs of gladness, so to greet

The sandalled beauty, who, majestic,

Paces the marble floor.

---

Her limb-encircling garments flowing fall  
In gauzy waves of whiteness evermore ;  
So moves she stately on, through her great father's  
    hall.

The vision fades. Again the master's touch  
Bids vague dissolving fancies throng the sight.

The courtly dance, with youthful limbs aglow,  
    Where youthful faces flush  
Amid a silken rustling and the beat  
Of satin shoes and lightly twirling feet.

The hall is warm and bright  
    With many a gem and many a spangled light.  
But ah ! without, how fresh the gracious night,  
On terraced gardens, where the cool airs flow  
Up from the shimmering crescent of the bay  
    below !

And yonder in the moonlight-floods, the pace

Of lover-feet on path and terrace stair  
Sounds silver sweet, while laughter everywhere  
In bubbling peals lurks in each shadowy place.

Alas! my dream is shattered! Hark! the sad,  
Soft rumbling that presageth coming woe!  
The distance bears the sound of martial tread  
With tramp depressed and slow.

That long deep note, so plaintive, yet so sweet,  
Whispers the path the fairest maid must go.  
Yes! heroes must lie low!—

So do those massive harmonies repeat.

How much our souls resent the clay-cold doom!

Oh! that I might but know

What dull remains of what once noble soul

They carry to the tomb!

Those wild, weird notes of gloom

Would burst the hearts wherein deep sorrows roll.

They come not near ! They fade ! They die  
away

Far towards the resting-place of that dumb clay.  
Fainter, and yet more faint ; soft, soft, and still  
They die into the hush of some foreboding ill.  
When,—hark ! from out the realms of formless  
fear

Rises a note, firm, bold, and clear !

Yet lonely is it heard,  
Like the first piping song of the first love-sick  
bird.

It swells ; then once more wakes  
The surging chorus of the banks and brakes,  
And far aloft, as if on angel wings,  
Above all sombre things,  
At the glad touch my spirit springs  
From out the realms of death, and its free flight  
it takes.

Oh! sweet, heart-healing strain!

Again and yet again,

Those vague desires and hopes insinuate  
That lift the soul somewhere by Heaven's gate.

The cheerful music to full volume grows.

The deftly-handled bows

With lightning touch fly o'er the speaking strings.

The horns and deep bassoon

Exultant hurry onward. All is life

And eagerness and zest.

The flute with liquid trill,

The oboe, sharp and shrill,

And the sweet clarionet, with mellow tune,

In rival concord, and harmonious strife,

Speed with impetuous haste.

Away! ye thoughts of death and musty sorrow!

Away! The life we quaff

---

Is a wild draught of bliss from which we borrow

Wherewith to laugh!

We greet thee, merry drum!

And you, ye cymbals, come

To lift our frolic to the very mound

And pinnacle of sound.

When ah! There rings a crash, and yet another!

The rolling drums their reckless tumult smother.

A short, sharp crash; and then

Silence has folded close her slumbering wings again.

**An Austral Sky.**

AT DAWN, NEAR THE HEAD OF THE YARRA.

THE morning breaks and day awakes  
To peer with peeping eyes,  
And every filmy cloudlet makes  
A pillow where he lies.  
A thousand notes, from throbbing throats,  
Salute him ere he rise,  
And, down the gurgling river, floats  
The blushing of the skies.

The cloudlets melt, the skies unfold  
Their dome of spotless blue,



In far ethereal spaces rolled  
And zones of cosmic dew.  
And higher still they rise, until,  
With gladness of the view,  
The joys of life and living thrill  
Our pulses through and through.

Oh! that my life may ever glide  
Beneath this Austral sky!  
That I may feel its gladness wide  
Roll in on heart and eye!  
No vision drear of man is here,  
Despair comes never nigh,  
But hope exults with healthful cheer  
While heaven is lifted high.

**A Song of August.**

THERE lies within the leafy west  
A spot of earth for ever blest,  
Where balmy breaths of spring abound  
And dreams encompass it around.  
There never have my footsteps passed  
Though winds were chill and skies o'ercast,  
But memory touched it with a waft  
And all the glade in sunshine laughed.

For there I sat when years were young,  
While whispered music from the tongue  
Of artless love came rippling free ;  
And oh ! that love was love for me !

And life, like one great glory, lay  
Before me then,—as when the grey  
And sombre clouds of morning break  
And floods of sunshine bid them wake.

At once the glories flush the skies,  
At once the blending voices rise,  
And cheerless things, that silent lay,  
Tumultuous hail the throbbing day.  
So in my heart the day-beam woke  
At each confession that she spoke,  
And as I drank the silvered sound  
The woods like dreamland nodded round.

The student joys when sudden light  
Reveals the problem full in sight ;  
The poet joys when o'er his mind  
A truth comes breathing like the wind.

But what were all such joys of theirs ;  
What every bliss that mortal shares,  
With that which poured its golden ray  
To light the night and gild the day.

And should not then that spot be green,  
That circle in the forest screen,  
Where life its meaning first conveyed,  
And all its comeliness displayed ;  
Still sleep, still slumber in the west  
Thou spot of earth so dear, so blest !  
With thee may breaths of Spring abound,  
And dreams encompass thee around.

---

*Hetty.*

WHEN Hetty, our housemaid, came to stay  
With us, she was merry, her heart was gay;  
And ever the kitchen and corridor rang  
With her lively chat and the songs she sang.  
But Hetty grew quiet, and very sedate,  
For every night, by the garden gate,  
There loitered a lad with leisurely feet;  
'Twas a carpenter come from the neighbouring street.

Now, Hetty was pretty, and clever, and good.  
That man should be happy, if any man should,  
Who came to our gate at the close of day  
And chatted with her in the twilight grey.

And Hetty grew merry, and hearty once more;  
She swept, and she rattled, and sang as before  
And her fresh girl-face had a look that said,  
“A secret I’ve got of my own in my head.”  
So Hetty one day with a blushing face  
Came in to give notice of leaving her place;  
And she said—that she thought,—that perhaps she  
    might be—  
She would like—she would wish to give—that is if we—

Poor Hetty. We knew very well what it was.  
But we asked if that carpenter lad was the cause.  
She fingered her apron, and faltering said,  
“If you please, he’s so good, is my carpenter lad.”  
We looked very stern, and we said it was wrong  
For these carpenter lads to come roving along,  
And spoil the best housemaid that ever we had.  
She said, “Please,—he’s so good, is my carpenter lad.”

---

But we only looked wiser, and solemnly said,  
“Some people are happy although they are wed.”  
She answered, and almost her pleading was sad,  
“But, oh! he’s so noble, my carpenter lad!”  
And now there’s a cottage, where Hetty can sing  
All day at her labours, a blithe little thing;  
And, watching at eve by the gate, she is glad  
When she seès the first glimpse of her carpenter lad.

**A Babe in Court.**

A BABE in court! A half translucent thing!  
Pink face, pink hands from dingy flannel showing.  
A little life of three days' slumbering!  
A new-sprung breath, of soft and even flowing.  
The constable with awkward care,  
On his blue cuffs and fingers brown,  
Pillows the head, and looking down  
With half of pitying, half of awe-struck air,  
Shields the soft lips and eyes that lie asleeping  
From wondering lawyer clerks and tip-toed loungers  
peeping.



A waif! A little waif! Its mother dead:  
Her white face in a darkened room is lying;  
The hospital goes toiling over-head  
And hears no more her sighs, her passioned crying.  
Her heart is still beneath her folded hands.  
That bosom where her baby lay,  
A joy, an anguish for a day,  
Is still enough within those linen bands.  
God keep the baby girl she leaves behind,  
For life's true path is dim, and doubtful oft to find.

The slumbering bundle duly is arraigned;  
The charge against it fully formulated.  
"Neglected child! No mother!" 'tis explained.  
The tale in ten short words is all narrated.  
A minute more, it passes out;  
A paper here and there is fluttered;  
Some words of transient pity muttered;

The wheel of law has moved a stage about.  
The tender visitant is soon forgot  
When that long list of sins engrosses every thought.

Sweet little babe!—intruder on life's stage!

A puzzle to us busy folks who fill it!

What love, what blessing is your heritage

Whom we would wish unborn, could we so will it?

Oh! loveless from the first!—unlovable,

The childhood that my fears presage

And a chill world for tender age,

That craves a nook in some warm heart to fill.

Oh! may the coming years bring some good friend

That shall, to those soft eyes, the light of loving lend!

## In the Valley of the Upper Watts.

AN UNEXPLORED MAGNIFICENCE.

VALLEY, dark, and moist, and mossy !

Stream, and trickling boulders glossy !

Waters leaping, gliding, curling

With a soft chromatic purling !

Beechen forest far extended !

Woven leaves and branches blended

In a mighty vaulted ceiling,

Scarce the zenith-blue revealing !

Here ! oh here ! my willing steps I stay !

Take me ! oh, take me to thyself for this one

day !

What a wealth of graces lavish!—  
Scents that soothe, and sights that ravish,  
Scattered in these wildernesses!  
See,—the long, the emerald tresses  
Pendent from the trees!—the bosses  
Large and round of delicate mosses!  
Luscious tints of green and golden;  
Things of joy, that once beholden  
Sink, yes sink, into the inmost being:  
In visions nestle there for the soul's secret  
seeing.

Mighty forest logs decaying,  
To the boom of waters swaying,  
Span the river, sometimes dipping,  
Sometimes splashed, but ever dripping!  
Each is wrapt in mossy cushion,  
Fernlets soft in bright profusion.

While upon the steep side mounting  
Fern-trees rise beyond all counting,—

Here! oh here! my willing steps I stay!

Here let me rest beneath their softly rustling  
sway!

All thy vastness burst upon me.

Unexpected glories won me.

Never word by mankind spoken

Hath thy silent ages broken;

But the lyre bird's heavy winging,

And the bell bird's silver ringing,

And the whip bird's sudden note

Ever through these glades did float;

And cries of those four-footed things of fur,

That from their trees do peep when evening  
breezes stir.

Now, o'er the forest, noon is creeping,  
And all is still, except the leaping,  
The rush, the bound of waters speeding,  
While I loiter all unheeding,  
Drinking in at every sense  
Draughts of sweetest influence.  
And here, what poets see in dreaming,  
See in truth beyond all seeming ;

While every thought is lulled with soothing  
pleasure

Beneath the drooping fronds that wave in  
easy measure.

Nature folds me round and round  
In this valley-depth profound.  
Seated in this mighty minute  
I am of it, more than in it.  
For my thoughts, all bounds transcending,

Still extending and extending,  
Joy to feel their wings can carry  
Out into the regions starry.

For he who looks on Nature's mightiest mazes  
Can feel the vastness pass into the soul that  
gazes.

Throbbing heart of mine, confess  
Words are folly to express  
Tumultuous joys that swell and roll,  
Surging through the awe-struck soul.  
Far as these mighty trees that bear  
Their tremulous crests to thinner air,—  
Far as their dizzy heights transcend  
This mortal frame o'er which they bend,  
So far this sight of beauty doth excel  
The proudest thought that words of men  
could hope to tell.

Would to God that men might learn  
To cease at times their bread to earn,—  
That mortal food, that transient raiment,  
For which they give their lives in payment,  
Might grant their souls some holiday,  
Slaves to tyrant frames of clay,—  
Might view in some such wonder spot  
All the glory round them wrought,  
Might let their souls expand to thoughts  
infinite,  
And dream, as now I dream, in this trans-  
cendent minute.



**A Prayer.**

LORD! when I nightly seek to know thy truth  
Do thou direct me! Listen to the prayer  
I oft address, that ere the flight of youth  
I may resolve with reverential care  
The doubts that close beset me; even where  
Tranquil convictions rested heretofore.  
Do thou, oh, Lord! to the inward sense declare,  
In the night-watches when my heart is sore  
With troubled thinking—have my hopes been vain?  
Has all I once thought given by thee of yore,  
Wherein to rest my soul I would be fain,—  
Has all been false? Let me not evermore  
Be troubled thus. Do thou, oh, Lord! again  
Peaceful delights and quiet thoughts restore.

**With Nature.**

OFT have I joined the reverential throng  
That fill our churches with their grateful song,  
And heard the solemn service float along,  
    Yet felt no influence of the Eternal there ;  
The breath I breathed was nought but  
    common air.

Oft have cathedrals wrapped me in their gloom  
With shadowy pillar and with ghostly tomb,  
While altars rolled their chants, their rich perfume,  
    Yet felt I not the Eternal presence there ;  
The circling breath was still but common  
    air.

In forest valleys I have dwelt alone  
A summer's day, where wildly overgrown,  
The leaves made a deep darkness of their own.  
    At morn, in idle mood I laid me there ;  
    At eve I wandered home with awe-struck air.

And I have wandered by the unbounded sea  
In gamesome humour, light, and gay, and free,  
Till a deep voice grew audible in me ;  
    A voice I cannot hear where men repair ;  
    It grows with lonely sands and salt sea-air.

For hour by hour a subtle influence steals  
And deepens inward, till my spirit feels  
In those dim fastnesses it ne'er reveals  
    An all-enfolding presence whispering there,  
    And thoughts flow deep that words could  
        scarce lay bare.

### The Human Heart and its Goal.

HAS faith grown stale? Does hope run dry

In these our busy ages?

Does greed alone light up youth's eye

And craft alone the sage's?

I heard the voice of him, who said,

In accents hard and bitter:

“All noble thoughts in man are dead,

Which once like stars did glitter.”

He said, “All hero-souls are gone,—

Long, long ago departed,—

Who once with splendid purpose shone,  
The great, the stately-hearted."

"And now," he said, "The fraudulent earth,  
That in deception festers,  
Bears none but men that shame their birth  
From glory-crowned ancestors."

"Poor huckster hearts and base," he said,  
"Of shams, and tricks, and lying,  
The age of chivalry is fled,—  
And manly virtue dying.

"The heart of man, grown poor and mean,  
Knows nought of grand endeavour,  
And it will taste of what has been  
On earth no more for ever."

He rails,—this greybeard, touched with bile,—

He rails in cynic fashion,

And spins long-membered words the while

To barb his gibing passion.

'Tis false! By yonder stars he lies,

That shine in unchanged splendour,

And see the world, each time they rise

More just, more wise, more tender!

For the great human heart hath grown

More full, more deep, than ever.

Ten thousand springs into it thrown,

It widens like a river.

Each noble deed, each kindly life,

Hath helped to set it brimming.

No student toil, no patriot strife,  
But flung some drops a-swimming.

And every poet's words that thrill  
From out a bosom glowing,  
All are like hidden threads that trill  
In leafy hollows flowing.

The rills descend by ways of thorns,  
But yet by many flowers,—  
Through moonlight nights, and golden morns,  
And veils of gauze-like showers.

And all along an hundred miles  
They drop, each trickling torrent ;  
And spread themselves in wreathing smiles  
Upon the swelling current.

And so, ten thousand influences  
Of happy inspirations  
Have joined the streams of life, and these  
Flow deep in many nations.

Thus Freedom grows; thus Peace prevails;  
Thus mutual Trust progresses;  
And a great dream of Right exhales  
From populous wildernesses;

And sympathy for sick and sad  
Exerts her empire spacious;  
And arts, like wine that maketh glad  
The heart, grow ripe and gracious.

So do the centuries deepen still  
The flow of human feeling,



Till, far beyond our prophet skill  
Our wildest dream-revealing ;

The heart of man, where'er it beat,  
Shall beat in simple beauty,  
Sincere and tender, pure and sweet,  
Perfect in love and duty.

**The Pestilence.**

## I.

BENEATH a larch-tree, in a forest glade,  
There sat a serf. His garb was rough and wild.  
The tangled wool upon his sheepskin made  
Grim fellowship with head and beard defiled.  
His burden lay beside him, and he whiled  
The minutes as he rested with a song,—  
A crooning rhyme, that sang of cradled child,  
Of wife, of home, which he should reach ere long.  
Beyond the woods, and up the hill-slopes gray,  
Perched like a nest, that lonely hamlet lay.

## II.

Repeating still his song, he rose and swung  
His bundle up as though to lift it high.

---

But stayed his hand ; the note died on his tongue.

He stood and gazed upon the western sky.

The sun was almost set. It scorched the eye

With furnace glare, and all the trees were black

Like ebon things against that brilliancy.

But far away was seen one fluttering speck

Of moving blackness that with rise and fall

Of laboured flight was wafted over all.

III.

With teeth agape, and eyes that seemed to burst.

The man stood watching, while that speck of gloom

Swept from the distance, clearer than at first.

A maiden's form, but ghastly as the tomb.

The Pestilence ! He knew her, and his doom

Smote at his knees, and on the grass he fell.

But she, alighting near the shuddering groom,

While on the air there spread a marshy smell,

With hollow-sounding words. "Fear not," she said;  
"Not for thy life I come, but for thine aid.

## IV.

"That hateful power which made me what I am  
Hath sent me on my mission. Over earth  
I must move ever on. But late I came  
From realms where I have stifled hope and mirth.  
And hither am I bid to wander forth  
And curse this land with bitter showers of tears.  
In palace towers; in huts of meanest worth;  
In towns; in hamlets; whereso'er appears  
Window, or door, or hearth, of living men  
I breathe one breath, and get me gone again.

## V.

"But oh! how weary these sad limbs of mine!  
The maiden of the pest can fare no more!

Now must thou bear me! Those strong limbs of  
thine

Must carry me to every mortal door!

The market place, the street, the public floor

We two must tread! Thou canst not thwart thy  
fate!

The power hath willed it! Yet thy burden sore

No man hath power to mark. A viewless weight

Thou still must bear. Rise! Thou shalt be my  
steed!

Now gird thy limbs to match their utmost speed!"

VI.

Then from the earth, like vapours miry-bred,

She rose dissolving. Round his neck she twined

Her shadowy limbs, and in his unkempt head

And burly beard her fingers slight did bind,

Then faded as a mist in parching wind.

He, looking up, perceived no trace of her,  
Yet with the weight his body was inclined.  
His knees were bent, and marrowless to stir,  
Till all at once a flush suffused his frame,  
And through his bones there sped a liquid flame.

## VII.

Then started he as one possessed. He sped  
With sweating limbs through forest paths afar,  
And chief where tracks of many footsteps led,  
Through twilight hours, until the evening star  
Her cheerful beam had quenched. Irregular  
The tramp of his quick footfall through the gloom.  
He reached a wayside cot. The door ajar  
Admitted him within a peaceful room.  
She, curling from his neck, like some black mist,  
The babe that slumbered in the corner kissed.

## VIII.

Alas! the night was heavy in that room.

The mother, when her infant's lip she pressed,  
Tasted its glow, and felt the pang of doom

Shoot straight within the hollow of her breast.

Ah! there was little time that night of rest!

The lights were hurrying to and fro, and feet

With whispering tread kept moving round the nest  
Wherein with features growing angel sweet

The babe, in quickening breaths, eked out its hours;

Then lay, a sculptured thing, pure as the flowers.

## IX.

Across the fields the stricken father bore

A tiny box and laid it low in clay.

Then sought again his straw-roofed house that wore

Sad signs of something wanting from the day.

But ere the morrow, she, his earthly stay,

Was speeding on the fiery road to death ;  
And her the neighbours bore in sad array  
Across the meadows. Ah! the dismal breath!  
The moans, the sighs, that from that cottage rolled ;  
The tears—hot tears—that fell in drops untold.

## X.

But meantime, he that bore the fever-maid  
Afar had sped. For in that ghastly night  
He spurned the highway with devouring tread  
Until there came a hamlet into sight.  
Its scattered huts showed many a feeble light.  
Here at an open window fluttereth  
A dainty curtain. In her hurrying flight  
The maiden peeps within and breathes a breath.  
Alas for human hopes! next day will rest  
The urchin hearts whose mirth that household  
blessed.



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XI.

At many a window, many an open door ;  
By chink, by cranny, did the fever-maid  
Breathe in that breath, with anguish barbed sore.  
She kissed the priest as on his knees he prayed ;  
She kissed the hind that home from revel strayed.  
Two lovers sat on slopes of bundled hay,  
Whispering the plans for life in union laid,  
With hopes that looked beyond the wedding-day.  
A musty waft they felt. Long ere they thought,  
Within the churchyard was their union wrought.

XII.

Here on the road there comes a toilsome wife,  
From market home returning. She receives  
A touch more deadly than from subtle knife.  
How soon will fade the cares o'er which she  
grieves !

There is the village inn. Beneath its eaves  
The ponderous benches still some stragglers hold  
With beer and pipe. Their talk is of the sheaves,  
Full-eared and ripe, well cut and shrewdly sold.  
To-morrow's waggons wait it. But that corn  
Will lie unlifted many an autumn morn.

## XIII.

Still on the highway sped that fatal pair.

The skies grew starless. O'er the moorland road  
The wind, with long-drawn howl, through coppice bare  
Sobbed in unearthly grief; and far abroad  
Thunderless lightnings on the horizon glowed.  
But through the darkness, on the uneven ground,  
Those heavy boots with fevered purpose trod  
Dogged, though sometimes tottering in their sound.  
The dawn, whose blush was cold and full of fate,  
Saw them beneath a town's still fastened gate.

---

XIV.

That day within the town was holiday.

Right early did the guard his bolts withdraw,  
And through the portal passed that peasant gray.

But none his spectre-burden guessed, or saw  
How his eyes glared ; how red his lips and raw ;  
For all the bells were rolling merriment.

They, tumbling, pealed as though one loud guffaw,  
Which woke the slum'bring houses. So there went  
A cheerful stir through every morning street,  
And loitering sounds of early passing feet.

XV.

But soon the streets are gay ; a mirthful crowd  
Fills all the market-place. The matrons there,  
In conscious comeliness and garments proud,  
Stroll in and out, and many a joke they share.  
The maids in saucy skirts and ribboned hair,

With kerchiefs neatly folded on their breasts ;  
The men, in trim attire, with gallant air  
Display the adroitness of their flattering jests.  
But where that peasant rough his way pushed  
through,  
The throng in angered silence paused to view.

## XVI.

By market-place, by street, by court, by lane  
That weary man sped onward, as impelled.  
The jolly chimes kept on their gleeful strain,  
The fiddle and the flute their tumult swelled,  
And fluttering flags were in long lines beheld ;  
Yet never rest, nor pause that peasant knew.  
Through every street his jostling way he held,  
At last ere noon his toil therein was through ;  
And he, departing, sought some other town  
Which he might traverse ere the sun went down.

XVII.

How jocund were the sports that afternoon !

The townsfolk flocked beyond their ancient wall,  
And there the fiddlers squeaked their friskiest tune,  
And mazy circles held the dancers all.

The booths beneath the lindens met the call  
Of many a bachelor and blushing maid,

Who quenched the thirst of their warm festival  
In oft-replenished draughts. And long they stayed  
Upon the grass, although the dews were chill,  
And midnight passed ere all the streets were still.

XVIII.

But far and fast that weary man had sped ;

Nor sleep, nor food, nor rest his limbs had  
known.

His boiling veins were with his vitals fed.

With many a burst of pity did he groan

To feel how far the fever breath was sown.  
A score of hamlets and a slumbering city,  
A populous palace, and a castle lone  
Had felt its waft. And oh! the ruth, the pity!  
Disease, pain, death, with grief and blinding sorrow,  
Waited for each throughout the hopeful morrow.

## XIX.

Upon the second morning, his sad way  
Turned back upon the town of festival.  
He passed far off; yet many a long array  
He well might mark, winding from out the wall.  
A dreary murmur wailed and sobbed o'er all.  
A sound of lamentations, and the fell  
Shouts of deep throats, and feebler pipings small,  
And the fierce booming of the passing bell,  
Rising above the tumult, loud and grim,  
To break the roll of many a funeral hymn.

## XX.

And so, from day to day, o'er all the land,  
There spread an ocean of despairing sound.  
An emperor had seen his rosy band,  
Four flaxen heads, with lead encoffined round.  
Ten thousand lowlier homes, that once were crowned  
With the same wealth divine of childhood, wept,  
Where spluttering candles through the night  
    profound  
Flickered their light on forms that coldly slept.  
And all the land was wailing, and a cry  
Rose, streaming upward far within the sky.

## XXI.

Not many places lay so hid, so close  
But that the fever-maiden there had spread  
Her mortal breath. And oh! how wild she was!  
All trace of sweet humanity was fled,

And fierce her lips with the grim work she sped.  
With vulture-scream she waved and tossed on high  
Her linen shroud, and shook her tresses red.  
A furnace glowed through either wandering eye.  
Astride upon the peasant's shoulders there,  
She twined her fingers in his tangled hair.

## XXII.

And cried, "Alala! on, my charger, on!  
No more will these folks roam a-junketing!  
From morn till eve, from eve until the dawn,  
They fill the hours with heavy labouring,  
To dig the pits wherein their dead to fling.  
Now leftward turn! A mountain hamlet lies  
Beyond this wood, where men still laugh and sing  
Unconscious. On a craggy crest there rise  
Three ruined towers; and climbing towards their feet,  
In straggling fashion, runs the village street."



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XXIII.

She showed a pathway through the forest gloom.

Alas! the peasant shook in every limb.

That hamlet he knew well. It was his home ;

And in its school, five sturdy grafts from him,

Five rosy children, nowise neat nor trim,

Yet gay with noisy tricks, might then be taught.

And, oh ! his eye could see, not faint, not dim,

The cot hard by, where at the steaming pot

His wife might toil ; could see the inner room

Where stood her bed and his, within the gloom.

XXIV.

And up the sloping bareness of the street,

There stood a cottage, where his parents old

Stepped in and out with slow deliberate feet ;

And there the green whereon his youngest rolled,

His baby, dearest of the precious fold.

Should death destroy them? Should those joyous  
eyes

Be pressed for ever into darkness cold?  
That loving wifely bosom, his heart's prize,  
Must that with all its bliss be swept away,  
To mix its warmth with senseless chill of clay?

## XXV.

Thus, as he faced the track, his heart was fierce.

It hammered hard through every turgid vein.  
His shaggy eye-brows twitched; he tried to pierce  
The forest growth, now right, now left; the pain  
Of brambles and sharp spikes, that brought a rain  
Of crimson drops, were nothing if he might

But burst the cursed fate that like a chain  
Compassed his strength in fetters close and tight.  
But all in vain. He could not leave the track,  
That path which led to wife and children back.

## XXVI.

That pathway bent where flowed a forest stream.

It skirted close the murmuring waters. Then  
The whirlwind passions of his spectre dream  
Burst in a frenzied cry. For of all men,  
None better knew than he that tree-clad glen.  
And, through its mazes, now he knew, not far  
The distance lay that led him home again.  
Then loud he prayed by every saint and star,  
And sought, with tears and broken words, to bend  
That reckless maiden from her obstinate end.

## XXVII.

Alas! she heard him not! but doubly wild,  
Still urged him on the path. There lay a pool  
Upon the left whereby the road defiled,  
Unknown of depth, dark, silent, smooth and cool,  
Wherein awhile the stream with waters full

Slept from its brawling in a gulf profound.

There, with a leap that burst her iron rule,  
He sprang from out the path in one great bound.  
One moment through the brushwood bank they fell,  
The while he clutched her feet invisible.

## XXVIII.

Swift as a meteor on September night,

They flashed and vanished. O'er her sinking  
head

The waters closed. Five circles, smooth and bright,  
With sparkling rim their silent ripples spread,  
Till on the banks a chirping sound they made ;  
Then all was still ; and all was dark again.

The waters slept in shadows dull and dead,  
Till to their surface, in a beaded train,  
A line of bubbles from the unseen sprung,  
The last hard gasps that throttling death had wrung.

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XXIX.

And where, or how, the fever-maiden fared,  
On earth of mortals was there none could know.  
But soon that land no more of life despaired.  
The plague no longer wandered to and fro ;  
The bells had rest from mournful tolling slow.  
In shrunken crowds again the markets met,  
And life resumed, though lame, its wonted flow ;  
And even mirth, which hastens to forget,  
At length with timid wiles her healing powers,  
Suffused to cheer that land from midnight hours.

XXX.

Yet none through all that land the secret learned  
Whereby their peace was wrought. 'Tis ever so.  
From humble sacrifice, by none discerned ;  
From unknown grappling with the fever foe,  
The might must spring that shall its head lay low.

Deep in sweet streams of running water drowned,  
The fever plague no more shall come and go,  
When every man, to guard his home's sweet bound,  
Shall sacrifice himself at that dear altar,  
Facing the task with heart that will not falter.

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**Home and the World.**

As yon great rock, by wind and waters torn,  
Lifts its red cliffs in seams and fissures worn,  
On it the waves, in leagues of tumbling white,  
Break in their wrath, and wreathe with hissing spite.  
The hoarse impact ascends but half the way  
To wet its brow with ineffectual spray.  
At every blow the cliff upon its base  
Shudders, and yet unmoved throws up its ruddy  
face.

There, at its foot, there lies a dainty pool  
Behind it spread;  
Sheltered from every wind, that crystal cool  
Reflects its storm-vexed head,

Hiding, in that pure bosom beautiful,  
The grassy brow that tips the glowing red.  
That head, in shining peace, lies nestling there,  
    And round it sweet things fair,—  
Those snowy veils that dream upon the blue,  
    Where heaven shines through,  
And all that glad expanse of light and air  
    Lie slumbering, where  
Those yellow topmost flowers, that tufted grass,  
    Sleep in their tender glass,  
Forgetful of the sea and all the storms that pass.

So be thou in the world. So raise thy life.  
On one side swelling from the petty strife  
    Of men and business care ;  
    But on the other, where  
Thy home extends the smoothness of its breast,  
    Sinking in trustful rest.



The vulgar ways of vulgar-scheming men,  
    Again and yet again,  
Ruffle thy front with prejudice and clatter !  
    Those waves in spray will scatter.  
Choose thou the right. What if the angry play  
Of bitter words roll round thee day by day,  
    'Tis no great matter.  
Small tongues and frivolous brains,  
    Full of their sordid gains,  
May toil and boil and bubble at thy foot,  
    And keep commotion, yet  
    Thyself they need not fret  
If high thou rear thy front and upward shoot  
Into that sphere of intellect where the fruit  
    Of life exalted shall be thine, the peace,  
    The sweet calm dignity, the solid ease  
    That trifles little recks,  
Soaring too high aloft for petty cares to vex.

Yet not too far from earth  
And all its simple mirth!  
Keep thou thy home, a sheltered place and calm,  
For thy soul's daily balm.  
There, bosomed soft and deep  
With all things lovely be thy healthful sleep.  
Let not its breast be curled  
With storms thou bearest from the outer world,  
But let affection spread  
A downy bosom for a restful head.  
So mayst thou find that though thy front may rise  
From curish cares to bask in sunny skies;  
Yet downward too it sinks to seek repose  
Among the cheerful throng whereon the firelight  
glows.

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**Love and the Law.**

THEY two were wedded on an April morn.  
Another April came, and still the sweet,  
The dream-like softness of their golden days  
Hung balmily above them, as the spring  
Dwelleth perennial o'er some coral isle.  
Happy their fortune in its median lot.  
Happy in that suburban street their cottage,  
Where, through the leafy shrubs,—a garden small,—  
Two windows, white with dainty curtain folds,  
Gave sweet suggestion of a dainty home.  
There, as she bustled through her housewife day,  
Her hours were one dear dream of evening's kiss.  
He to his toils abroad, as morning grew,

Waving the last farewell, addressed his steps ;  
Therein, with hearty vigour, laboured well,  
A man of trust with those he served. And yet,  
Whate'er of zeal might fill the garrulous day,  
There slept a corner, all unknown to men,  
Deep in his tranquil heart, where, falling unheard,  
A light, like sunbeams, played.

As one who digs

In some rich garden, on a sunny morn,  
Hears, though he scarcely heeds them, the rich  
notes,

The cadences of spring-enraptured birds ;  
Breathes, though he thinks not of it, blended  
scents

From summer-basking blossoms, and is glad  
He knows not why : So toiled that ardent heart,  
And drank a bliss unconscious. For there shone  
The warmth of that dear moment, when, at eve,

A bosom soft should press him, two fond lips,  
Two love-belustred eyes, upturned, should meet  
A rain of kisses. Happy were their days.

To her no man on earth was as her own.  
This might be worth in this, and that in that.  
But for all worthiness,—all the sum of good,  
Her own was such as never breathed, nor breathes.  
He, too, looked into eyes wherein he saw,  
Unmatched on earth, sweet, self-forgetful love  
Shine as the light shines from full-circled moons.  
How potent is the comeliness that plays  
On simple faces lit by mutual love!  
Therefore it is that not one loveliest,  
Not one most exquisite face of woman dwells  
Among earth's crowds of women. Many such,—  
Many the loveliest,—many are the best,—  
As many as the hearts of honest men,  
Wherein true love hath found its sacred shrines.

So they two dwelt in gladness, and there came  
Other and other Aprils, but no babe;  
No white-socked feet pattered upon their floors;  
No prattling tongue kept theirs in busy talk  
To tell the wonders of its gathering wit.  
Therefore the more was each to other bound;  
Therefore the more did each the other tend  
With watchful fondness that might make amends.  
And so in peaceful wise the years rolled by;  
The winter evenings by the social fire  
With novel or with history read aloud.  
The summer eve more oft abroad, to taste  
Whatever offered of amusement, meet  
For loving comradeship.

But the eighth spring  
Brought a faint cloud to dull their azure sky.  
For she, at times, her hand upon her side  
With lightning speed would press, and a quick cry

Told of a pain that flashed, and stabbed, and went.

Yet, save the pallor of a minute, left

No trace when it had sped. She saw his heart

Troubled and heavy, and she rallied him.

“’Twas nothing. Some such passing spasm,” she  
said,

“As delicate frames of women often bear.”

And all too gladly was he comforted ;

And yet he might have quailed had he seen all ;

Had he but known how with the passing months

More frequent came the shafts of poignancy ;

But she, with wifely courage, schooled herself

And learnt to bear in silence. Not a glance,

No twitch, no start betrayed the secret stab ;

But where they had come by weeks, they came by  
days ;

And where they had come by days, they came by  
hours ;

And on her features wrote their desolate tale  
In lines that might be read of all men,—all  
But eyes of love, which lurking dread makes blind.

Alas those wakeful hours! when by his side  
She heard the chimes that lengthened to the hour,  
The hours that lengthened out, with each a stroke  
Added to that before; and then would come  
The ghostly faintness of the creeping dawn,  
And from the grayness, slowly, one by one,  
Emerged the features of the misty room.

Those hours of night while still he slept, she  
    passed  
With thoughts unutterable in any speech.  
For well she felt the doom that glided near;  
And well she boded of the parting hour.  
Yet, for she deemed no cure could be, she strove  
Never by word or moan, or whispered sigh,  
To breed suspicion ere her time should come.



More tender, yet less joyous grew her love ;  
More eager, yet less satisfied his care ;  
And earth, somehow, its brightness seemed to  
show

Through dingy haze, and life its healthful tide  
Sped with a lessening impulse in his veins.  
To wake at morn brought the full throb no more  
Of joy-remembering consciousness ; a gloom  
Gathered, and love could chase it not away :  
Nor tender words, nor felt nor given caress,  
Nor balmy eyes together, nor the morn  
With soft renewal of companionship.

At last it chanced he opened wide his eyes,  
Too fondly closed before, to see the truth.  
Then, in her wasting cheeks, her pallid brow,  
Her eyes, with lustre now no longer soft,  
Liquid and full, but glassy bright, he read  
Her secret from her ; and he urged confession.

At first she thought to baffle him ; but love,  
If once it lose its blindness, penetrates  
With quick-eyed vision born of jealous dread,  
And so the truth perforce she granted. On his  
breast

Leaning the meekness of her nut-brown head,  
She gave her long-pent anguish full relief.  
Long flowed her tears,—long shook her delicate  
frame

In silent throbs ;—then words found broken course.

“Oh, darling one, that made my life so bright—  
My sum of earth, and all earth’s happiness—  
Soon must I leave thee !”

He, with trembling limbs,  
And face grown white as face of shrouded corpse,  
Kissed the pale sweetness of her nestling brow.

“Leave me, my love,” he said, “thou dearest one,  
Brightest and kindest of all wives that are !

Thou shalt not leave me, for in God's good world  
There must be remedy, and we shall seek  
Such skill as shall dispel our fears!"

And close

He pressed her sobbing heart to his; but she,  
Checking the inward swelling of her tears,  
Grew calm and said:

“Glad shall I be, how glad,  
To share your hope. And what the power may be  
Of science let us make trial. Yet my trust  
Is frail, is very frail. And oh, my love,  
To die would not be sad in days like mine  
Were I not leaving thy sweet fellowship!”

Here, breaking in upon her discourse, he:  
“But we shall cure these pains. Our frugal cares,  
Thy watchful zeal in household management,  
Have left us wherewithal to pay the skill  
Of whatsoever lives of reputation;

Within our cup of fate, believe me, yet  
There brimmeth many a year of happiness."

Then with a smile—a smile enframed in sadness,—  
Her eyes replied to his a mild assent.  
As one who fain would be convinced, yet feels  
No inward mastery of conviction, so  
She ceased from argument, and silent lay  
With arms enclaspt around him, till a pang  
Struck her and left her drooping; and she drew  
From him apart to rest her faintness, still  
Holding his hand in hers; and so they sat  
Till twilight deepened darkly.

All that eve  
Assiduously he tended her! All night  
Awake he lay, conning the names of those  
Whose manifold triumphs in the healing art  
Were wideliest noised abroad. When morning came  
He told her of his choice, whereto she made

A soft assent, as one who had no part,  
No care, no interest, but to pleasure him.

And so, betimes, while still the day was fresh,  
They sought that stately mansion, and a place  
Found in the whispering room which, waiting, sat ;  
A suffering throng that, one by one, distilled  
Through the green portal, to that inner place  
Where the great man heard half a city's woes.  
Long was their turn in coming, but it came ;  
And then, the threshold crossed, they stood at last  
In that expectant moment of their fate.  
But, as they seated them, that masterful face,  
Bending its keen grey eyes upon her, read  
Full half her secret from her, ere a word.  
A darkly resolute face it was, and nerved  
To fight, as oft it fought, a desperate fight  
With death, if that there lay of life a hope.  
He heard their tale, and clouded was his brow.

A few brief questions asked, and little uttered,  
He made appointment, when his leisure served,  
To visit at their home. A kindly word,—  
Kindlier for the gruff voice that uttered it,—  
A tone of sympathy that seemed a knell,—  
And they were in the open.

How the mild sun  
Flooded with joy the outward parts,—in vain,—  
Having no power to touch the inward gloom!  
How hollow sounded then the sparrows' twitter  
Echoing through dreary vaults of desolate hearts!  
So did he homeward fare, as in a land  
Of feigned enchantments; where no thing he saw  
Was real, nor any sound he heard was aught  
But fantasy of a dream.

Evil that dream;  
Evil the night, and evil still the morrow;  
And his heart sweated drops of anxious dread,

While the dull hours of sunshine sullenly rolled  
And brought the time appointed.

Sharply the steeds  
With jar of wheels drew in their course; and  
then  
Forth with the swinging door the man of science  
Sprang, and a second followed. So they passed  
Into the house and shut themselves alone,  
To read that mystery of a suffering fate.

It was an hour that wrought more time to him  
In his full heart than many a year had made;  
But with those echoing footsteps it was done.  
How thirst the eyes of fearful love to drink  
The tidings borne on arbitrating faces!  
Alas, they omened ill! He read her fate,  
And from their lips he heard it. It was death;—  
A lingering death,—a death of pangs and pains,  
And creeping weakness.

Then they went, and he  
Heard their farewell, their somewhat-purporting words,  
As one who dwelleth ever by the sea  
Might, wrapt in study, hear its billows fall—  
Hear without hearing. And awhile he stood  
To let his whirling thoughts fly round, that poured  
In crazy riot through his nerveless mind ;  
And, one by one, those words that hovering strove  
To reach his heart, like seabirds round a lighthouse,  
Found entrance there, and with them, as they grew  
To semblance of their meaning, anguish rose  
And swelled and burst, and so he cast himself  
To wrestle with his turbulent hour alone.  
And none beheld his silent-heaving sides ;  
And none might hear the quivering of his breath ;  
And none could know of all that passed within.

That dark hour crossed, that deep abysmal gulf,  
Which sundered happy from despairing life,



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There came a calm; cheerless, yet such as men  
May clothe in cheerful seeming, and he passed  
To seek her bedside, with his countenance  
Set to a comfortless smile. So do the waves  
Glitter with shimmering sparkle when the sun  
Throws its first glint after the hurricane gloom.  
Over the vessel gulfed, the ripples leap;  
While unconsoling glitter, drearily bright,  
Shines, surface sweet, above a depth of sorrow.

So, cheerlessly bright, he sat beside her bed,  
Comforting with caresses, for of words  
He had no craft to fashion comfort yet.  
She, offering her pale lips to kiss him, said:

“I know it all; I know what thou dost know,  
And what has meant for thee the hour that’s gone—  
How my heart melted at thy suffering!”

Thereat he trembled and his raven beard  
Stooped till it mingled with her hair.

“Seven years !

Only seven years,” he groaned, “of happiness,  
And life is over, for these years are fled !”

“Not wholly fled,” she answered ; “who can tell  
How far my lame days yet may totter on?  
And well I promise, while my life shall last,  
We two shall still make each the other’s cheer.  
See,” and she rose upright, “I have no thought  
To lie abed yet many a summer’s day.  
Now, stay by me, and while I dress do thou  
Once more become my clumsy waiting-maid !”

She rose and decked herself with scrupulous care,  
Breathing a tender gaiety in her talk.  
She bade him smoothe the bed that ruffled lay.  
She kept him playfully busy, and a kiss  
Repaid each willing service, till, betimes,  
A little of that blackness rolled away  
Which had before enveloped earth and him.

Such is the magic loving courage can.

And when they two sat by their evening meal,  
Though life seemed aged grown, its age was calm ;  
And after, when beside the leaping fire  
He drew the sofa fronting it, she lay  
Restful, in joyous respite from her pain.

Oh what a long sweet lover eve was that !

And, when at length they sought their couch, their  
          hearts

Drawn wondrous close in love, pressed close their  
          pulses,

Till peace grew full, and a long slumber fell.

And many days and many weeks ensued  
Of sombre peacefulness ; though her the pain,  
The sudden stab oft-times oppressed, her face,  
Doubly and trebly steeled, no token gave.  
He, as his former care lent ample warrant,  
Leaving his post, no more fared city-ward.

He spent his days with her. They walked abroad ;  
They plied light garden tasks ; they read together ;  
They communed much, and so the time passed by,  
Sweet with a mournful sweetness, sadly bright.

But time, the happiest time, destroys himself.  
The happier he, the speedier is his doom.  
And happy days were over, for her pains  
Were such at length as human fortitude  
Might not defy. And she grew weak ; her face,  
Pallidly sweet, was marked with deepening lines.  
Then in his eyes a yearning woke, and shone  
Sad beyond utterance.

And no more they walked  
Breathing the outer air together. Slowly  
She paced the rooms leaning upon his arm ;  
Now this, now that, as restlessness of woe  
Urged her in desolation to make trial.  
And then the nights ! Alas, those weary nights !

No blessed balm of sleep, but broken lulls  
Of half-distracted senses ; till he prayed,  
Although the prayer was anguish, till he prayed  
Through the long darkness, marred with tossing pain,  
Prayed that her life might end.

And for a time

It seemed his prayer was heard, for her decline  
Was daily hastening, and she cared no more  
To stir about. Her slow and tottering limbs  
Bore her so feebly that she fain would lie,  
Resting abed ; sometimes in his strong arms  
Borne to this sofa and anon to that.  
And doctors came, and looked, and talked, and went ;  
But all as one agreed that life not long  
Might now protract its pitiful tediousness.  
And one at last, so frail so worn her look,  
So passing her weird beauty, prophesied  
That with the month her life would vanish. Sweet

As harbour-home to shipwrecked mariner  
She saw that goal in sight ; while, in his love,  
He too rejoiced to know the end not far.  
Though where, when she was gone, where upon  
earth

He might betake his sorrow ; with what hope  
He should confront existence ; how his days  
Could still go moving onward, she departed,  
He wearily wondered ; but the view lay dark.

And yet the end so prayed for came not nigh,  
For hidden springs of strength poured fitful aid  
To feebly fill her shrinking current of life.  
A desperate strife her bodily power prolonged  
Against disease, and pain, and sleepless nights.  
But, in her woe, she wept, and moaned, "Oh, God ;  
When will it end?" And from one tortured darkness  
Livid with agony, there burst the cry,  
"Oh, if thou love me, dear one ; if thou love me,

Give me some draught, give me some draught of death  
To end my life and this! Oh, give me rest!"

He felt his arm by fevered fingers grasped;  
And his soul shuddered with excess of agony.  
He soothed her, moistening those dry lips of hers;  
But it was long before the unutterable time  
Passed over her, and she lay still and death-like.  
Ah! not once only, nor a score of times!  
But many scores came of such deadly pangs;  
And what in body she endured,—in mind  
He suffered with a trebled poignancy.  
And oft he groaned, "Oh, thou good God! how long,  
How long is this to last beneath Thy sight?"

At length a dumb importunate whisper spoke  
From out his anguish, and whenas she dosed,  
Sometimes in quiet of an afternoon,  
He read, in history, tales where men make bold  
And slay their wives to save them; seeking death

Themselves hereafter. That grim tale of York  
And Hebrew courage did he oft repeat,  
Till a dim purpose grew within his heart.

When next a doctor passed his door he asked,  
With hoarsely altered voice, "How long, think you,  
Might this thing last?" The worthy veteran  
Wove endless chains of sense-enveloping words;  
Till he, impatient, striking at the core,  
Reached the short truth that science was at fault.  
Her life, ere then, should have been merged in peace  
Had symptoms prophesied their due results.  
That death was certain none, he said, could doubt;  
But when, it now seemed futile to forecast.

So bleeding love was left again to dream  
Of months and months of nameless agony.  
But in the dead of night, when next the cry  
Woke the sad rest of that sick-lighted room,  
Then to her tortured words, "Does no one love me



Enough to bring me one sweet draught of peace?  
Oh, dearest, you could give it me!"

There came

The deep and solemn answer, "And I will

But she, as hearing not, lay still and panting,  
While through an endless hour her breath came quick;  
Then till the morning lay as one entranced.

At last, returning ease brought back the words  
Muttered in horror of her midnight woe,  
And she, as one in fear, rose up and said,

"Dearest, come near me! What were those words  
of thine

That answered to my madness? Do not dream  
Of aught so rash, for though I pray for death,  
And from thy hand would drink it gladliest,  
Yet such a deed thou must in no wise dare.  
The world would rank such kindness as a crime:  
Thy life might be the forfeit of thy love."

Yet he, in scorn, "My life! my life a forfeit!  
What is my life to me? I love it not.  
If thou be gone, life is to me a corpse,—  
A cold, dull semblance whence the soul is fled.  
We bury dead things—view not their decay.  
What were a mummied life for me that have  
Remembrance of its juiciest freshness? No!  
I loathe the thought of living. Rather we,  
Together leaving life, shall fare together,  
And learn what life awaits of milder rule  
Where kindlier reigns of Providence have sway."

But she, holding apart, convulsed with fear,  
In quickening accents whispered, "No; not thou!  
Ah no, my love, not thou! my love, not thou!  
Oh, it was nothing, that most meaningless cry  
Wrung from my wandering lips through misery!  
God will give peace, and I shall wait his will!"

And answer made he none; but his grim thought

Was ever with him, and he conned it o'er.  
Though days passed by, yet every day that passed  
Strengthened his thought.

For every midnight cry  
Curdling his blood, while the great city slept,  
And every touch of that pain-wetted brow,  
And every frenzied grip of those dear fingers,  
And every stony glance of mute appeal,  
Deepened his purpose.

And there came a night  
When all was eerie still, save for the jars  
Of creaking midnight. Resting upon a chair,  
One sallow light beside the bed lit up  
A wasted arm hanging from out the sheets ;  
It lit a white face, framed in shadowy hair,  
Lovely but spectral. Up and down he paced  
With feverish step, while maddening grief convulsed  
His face and tremulous hands, for he had gazed,

Helpless once more, on all that withering scene,  
Which left her death-like there. But when her  
strength

With faint return of day revived, he said :

“God be my witness that I love thee truly ;  
And what is there that true love will not dare ?  
Does it fear death ? What recks it of men’s  
tongues ?

To-morrow night shalt thou, my love, drink deep ;  
Drink and dream out of sorrow. Drink, and away  
Be wafted, if some spirit clime there be  
Untouched of this world’s dreariness ; and I  
Shall drink a fellow draught ! and if the law  
Have any charge on me, it mounteth not  
Unto my life. Yet I shall give my life  
In full requital and shall owe it nought.”

And when the night was changed to chill grey light,  
She bade him sit beside her, and they reasoned

Of right and law, of love and love's behests,  
In tortuous chase of ethic principle.  
He showed the dreariness of his lonely life,—  
No sin could be in loving tenderness,—  
Rather the law was debtor for a deed  
Of kindly purpose.

And her doubting mind  
By slow degrees took comfort, and a hope,  
Never before contemplated, made bright  
The slowly wakening prospect. Not alone,—  
No, not alone should she now face the way;  
But with her loved one, faring side by side,  
Should pierce the glooms of chaos, and his smile,  
Dearer than visioned angels', might perchance  
Light up the darkness of the measureless voids,  
Star-dotted and yet chill.

And daylight crept  
Upon them as they talked. Its beams were cold;

But rosy were their hopes. That rising day  
Would light a world to toil, but them to peace.  
For as it closed they two, such their design,  
Soaring together, were to spurn this earth,  
Making mysterious explorations far  
Among the starry hosts. And when he slipped  
His hand beneath her tresses to lift up  
Her bloodless lips to taste the throbbing love  
That warmed his own, no face on earth more glad ;  
No eye that beamed more placidly than his.

The sun ascended on a genial morn,  
And dipped upon a golden afternoon.  
He spent them in that little kitchen, neat  
And bright and trimly packed ; her dainty realm,  
Wherein, through many a bygone cheerful day,  
She, toiling in her happy labours, dreamt  
Of eve and him and kisses. On her table,  
Bleached white with much assiduous cleanliness,

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He plied a task too slight to seem so deadly;—  
A glassy flask, some tubes, a pale blue flame,  
And slow and sullen drops of distillation.  
Yet on that task there shone slantwise the sun  
With peaceful rays dust-spangled. The great world  
Smiled in its healthful beauty.

Twilight came,  
And for a last time they their converse held  
On and still on amid the gathering gloom,  
As had been oft in many a happy eve.  
And then she said, "My heart misgiving grows  
Of this our desperate purpose. Pain is selfish;  
And I, too selfish, thought but of myself  
And that glad promise of thy comradeship.  
Forget that I assented. Let it be.  
In God's good time I die, but thou shalt wait,  
With many a duty yet perchance in store,  
Till fate fulfilled shall bid thee follow me."

And he made answer : " No ; we both must die.  
Should I not risk my life to save a stranger's ?  
Should I not lose it to save thine at need ?  
And shall I not have power to lose it now  
Doing thee faithful service ? "

But she, faltering,—  
" Oh, dearest one, thy life hath far more worth  
Than for such cause to be so lightly cast ;  
To-night when next my terrible time is come,  
And pain has nerved my courage, give me the  
draught,

But live thou on and think of me. Keep green  
My favourite flowers upon my grave ; keep fresh  
Within thy heart the memory of our loves.  
Dream of me where I dwell, and if I may  
From out the starry regions stoop, thy dreams  
Will feel a radiant influence, and will bloom  
In heart-contenting visions of my joy ! "



But he, as one determined, made reply :  
"This cannot be. Consenting to thy death  
I arm the laws against me. It is fixed.  
I go with thee. We leave a warring tide  
Of jangling words to praise or blame our fate.  
Their possible babble did distract my purpose.  
But that is passed. Now let them talk, say I.  
Perchance the popular heart, hearing our tale,  
May melt to know thy suffering and our love,  
And shed—a three days' talk—the impotent shower  
Of pitiful words over our published names.  
What need we care? What recks the morning sun  
That some may bless his rising, and some curse.  
His sphere is far from theirs ; and further still  
Shall ours be from these prating tongues, ere morn  
Awakes them once more to their gossiping."

And to his stronger will her will gave way.  
So when the lights were lit he busied him

Ranging his papers. Some he burnt; some laid  
Conspicuously about him; some he packed  
In bundles to their separate resting-places.  
And whilst he deftly moved, she woke and slept  
In fitful turns, until her breath came short,  
And a faint sigh suppressed gave warning note.  
It was a sound he knew. Kneeling beside her  
He held her hand, while in fierce throbs the pain  
Frenzied her features till she hoarsely cried,  
“The draught! the draught! Quick! quick! Give  
me the draught!”

With trembling hands he poured, and held it up  
To touch her out-stretched lips; she drank, and,  
shuddering,  
Sank on her pillow motionless, while the pain  
Ebbd slowly from her. Then once more her eyes  
Opened and shone that light of tenderness  
Upward upon him; and when ease was come,

“Dearest,” she whispered, “dearest one, farewell.  
My heart is grateful for these loving years.  
My senses taste a touch of exquisite languor.  
Lay thy cheek here upon the pillow near me,  
And I shall drowse into thy neighbouring ear  
The last words of these lips.”

And then she spoke  
Things that were sacred things betwixt these twain,  
While his deep voice, sinking in solemn whispers,  
From time to time made answer.

Then rising up,  
Feeling his face, she kissed him, and she murmured,  
“It is the last; sleep holds me,—far away,—  
My husband—”

Then her face lay softly slumbering,  
White amid white, like snowdrops ridged with snow.  
Some formless words, but pretty, passed her lips;  
Then merged her life in silence, and she lay

Breathing, but dead. Long by her bed he knelt,  
And his great sob was felt o'er all the room ;  
A silent throb and nameless ; and he poured  
Such tide of passionate prayer as needs must reach,  
Whatever dwells on high of deity.

Faint and more faint her breathing, till her breast  
Lost its last heaving, and her spirit passed.  
And thrice he kissed her chilly lips, and thrice  
Each closèd eyelid ; and long time he gazed  
Upon the lily sweetness gathered there ;  
Then ordered decently the folded sheet  
Over her silent heart.

And then he moved  
With awesome step, yet steady, through the house.  
Closed every door, through which the city sounds  
In the dull midnight passed ; the windows closed ;  
Quenched all the lights, save that alone which burnt  
Within the room of death. Then poured his draught

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And raised it to his lips ; yet set it down  
Once more to view, with tear-belustred gaze,  
The sweet translucent whiteness of her face ;  
And many times he kissed it, till his heart  
Grew all too great, too wild to be contained.  
Then dashing the light to darkness, he tossed up  
The potion-glass and drank an eager death.

Then, creeping past her strangely motionless form  
He laid him by it, till a numbness came,  
And pleasant visions moved his smiling lips.  
And once more, as his wont had been, he slipped  
A sheltering arm beneath her clustering tresses.  
So did the midnight waft across them there,  
And, ere the dawn, his spirit passed. There lay  
Two lover forms in silence, and the chill  
Of morning gathered slowly round them.

**My Little Ones.**

My heart is aching, and my eyes are full.

Oh little ones, sweet little ones at rest  
How dear ye are! How dear and lovable  
Two baby heads upon one pillow pressed

Here have I sat and heard your childish chat,  
So sweet, so simple, cadenced like a brook  
And joy came throbbing to my heart thereat,  
Feeling the loving word,—the trustful look.

And now ye slumber, for the day is done.

Those nimble tongues, those busy brains are still;  
Back, back ye tears, why should ye seek to run  
With morn their voices all the house will fill

But ah! I dream of times when ye no more  
Shall laugh as now ye laugh with baby glee;  
When ye shall bring me other joys in store,—  
But these for ever lost to you and me!

Therefore my heart is full. I cannot drink  
So deeply of this draught, but in those years  
That are to come, I oft must sit and think  
On these sweet days, and long, yes long with tears  
That once again, upon this little bed,  
I might but lean and hear your baby talk,  
And join your laugh, and stroke each darling head  
And feel your hands my fingers warmly lock.

Good night, ye slumb'ring dears—and fairy dreams!  
May the years coming lie upon us light,  
To leave our life awhile as now it seems,  
And ye be long as children in my sight.

**In Dreams.**

HER arms about my neck will cling  
In dreams for ever and for ever;  
A gentle little six-year thing  
For ever and for ever.

She is a dream of vanished bliss,—  
A dream for ever and for ever;  
But oh! the anguish of her kiss!  
For ever and for ever.

And still she sits upon my knee,  
In dreams, for ever and for ever,



And lays her nestling head on me  
For ever and for ever.

I was her darling. She *is* mine,  
In dreams, for ever and for ever.  
Sweet little fingers, clasp and twine,  
About my neck for ever.

**A Dirge.**

DEEP are her slumbers, and fear no awaking.

The kind earth hath folded her into its breast.  
O'er the dark cypress when morning is breaking,  
None will arouse the dear babe from her rest.

For the sweet soul that awoke with the dawning  
Never shall brighten the love-sparkled eye.  
Nor the sweet voice with its gentle intoning  
Waken to music as day rises high.

Silent she sleeps in the dew-sprinkled morning  
Silent when sunbeams fall soft on her tomb ;  
Silent and sad when the night-shades returning  
Wrap the still grave and the cypress in gloom.

**Shelley.**

HAST ever seen the moon  
Shine upward from the depths of some wide lake  
Upon a placid eve, too soon  
For the first breath of dew-chilled air to wake?  
Her clear-cut crescent glows  
With filigree of radiant cloudlets round,  
No blur in all the glorious depths is found.  
But far away it shows,—  
That lustrous vault profound—  
Wherein the mimic moon sleeps underground.  
Cold is its stately beauty; and remote  
From men, and lives of men, its motionless splendours  
float.

So sleeps within the thought

Of some great poet his immortal fire.

While sufferings touch it not,

It shines in depths profound,

Nor gives to upper air one throb, one sound.

All underneath the lives of men it glows—

Those common cares that tire

And vex the souls that hurry to and fro.

But deep within his breast,

As in some stately dome of throned rest,

It dreams in shining sleep,

And its regardless path in its own sphere doth  
keep.

Thus men, who rarely look

Far in the depths of slumbrous lake or brook,

Nor often seek to find

The thoughts that build the life of some calm  
mind,

---

See not the moon that rides  
In glory far below the summer tides.  
Nor yet the light profound,  
That shines in poet-breast without a throb or sound.

Hast marked the waters stirred  
By that first breath of eve which lightly passes,  
With rustling scarcely heard,  
What time upon the tremulous tips of grasses  
The dew has hung its stars of atomy flashes?  
With that first ripple all the moony deep  
Dissolves its distant sleep,  
And when the breezes wake,  
Across the surface creep  
Wide floods of glory o'er the shimmering lake.  
No longer far away  
With coldly tranquil ray,  
No longer set on meditative throne

In kingdoms all its own,  
But nearer, clearer, kindlier to the glance  
It spreads its broad expanse.  
Then men, though hurrying on their various ways,  
Stop, and a moment gaze  
To mark the splendour of that quivering blaze ;  
And, as it kindles to the spell-bound eye,  
In exquisite awe, they, standing long, enjoy  
That beauty which is theirs, because they deem  
it nigh.

And such the change which breaths of suffering  
Over the poet's lonely spirit bring.  
Where meditation sat with soft wings furled,  
Far in another world,  
A breeze of pain from out the sordid earth  
Wafts,—and a flood of glory springs to birth.  
That orbéd radiance which was throned afar

Bursts into many a star,  
And all that light which not a pulse did mar  
In self concentrated,  
Now in wide floods of tremulous glory shed  
Across the wondering hearts of awestruck men is  
spread.

Hail, holy power! Hail, touch divine of sorrow!  
From thee our singers borrow  
That moving force which, wafting as a breeze,  
Dispels their voiceless ease,  
And bids them spring to meet our human sympathies!

Thou, Shelley, thou wast wrung  
By many a pang, so that thy thirty years,  
With life and hope still young,  
Might well have been a term of nightly tears.  
But thou hadst never sung

In happy days that knew no cares, no fears,  
Those strains whose mystic roll  
Is that vibrating thrill of sadness, whence  
There breathe across the soul  
Those chords of pitying love, the heart's best  
influence.

For though thou sangst of hope,  
The prophet thou of ages yet to ope,  
Which in thy rosy dream  
Too near, too soon, too palpable did seem,  
Thy song is nowhere glad,  
But ever tells the bitter birth it had,  
In pains, in scorns, in faults, in wanderings,  
In loss, in death, in persecuting stings.  
Thy man-befriending view  
Saw earth arise in happy vestures new.  
The earth men made thee was a sorry dwelling  
For a proud spirit swelling



To heights whose majesty no words have power of  
telling.

Yet from thy troubles sprang our infinite gain.

Thy troubles passed; our solid fruits remain.

For every note of thine

Was love-attuned to guide us on our way

Into that age divine

When Peace should shine and wars be swept away;

When Freedom should throb high in every land;

When the great mass of men no more should stand

A herd of feeding clay,

Slaves to their despots, slaves to worse than they,

Their sensuous selves,—but all

Grown wiser, purer, nobler, manlier, should

The whole earth fill with one glad brotherhood.

Such was thy sanguine thought,

And such the vision that thy fancies wrought,

For hope swelled high in every verse; yet there

That hope was child of pain and present care.  
For all thy strains we owe  
To ruffling breaths that o'er thy soul did blow,  
Scattering its brightness forth so that the world might  
know.

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**Australia to England.**

A REPLY TO LORD TENNYSON'S "HANDS ALL ROUND."

JOIN our hands! We shall most gladly.

Where thou goest we shall go ;

Distant be the day when sadly

Sinks our sun of empire low.

Still in triumph or in sorrow

All thy fortunes we shall share ;

From thine honoured name we borrow

All the lustre that we bear.

Hand in hand we'll trace the ages,

Stalwart children, mother hale,—

Thou hast bred us,—thou hast made us ;

Every fostering care hast paid us,

Now our duty shall not fail.

Hand in hand, we'll face together

Blinding storms or sunny weather.

Thou that greatly lead'st the nations,

Reverenced as the just—the wise!

Thou that, with unselfish patience,

Wip'st the tear from suffering eyes!

Thou the freedom brought'st that blesses,—

Freedom to be kind and true;

Not the freedom of excesses,

Not the freedom of the few.

Lead thou on, we closely follow,—

Glad to press thy helping hands!

Sweep away the base, the hollow;

Raise the countless hordes that wallow

Darkly in oppressed lands.

Hand in hand we'll face together  
Blinding storm or sunny weather.

Cometh slow but sure the dawning  
Of that often sighed-for day,  
When all meanness, cringing, fawning  
From the earth will pass away.  
When all men shall feel as brothers  
Conscious of a true man's worth ;  
Each respectful of all others,  
Not alone of wealth or birth.  
Thou hast caused that day to glimmer.  
Lead thou on ; we grasp thy hand.  
Till it fairly dawn, if grimmer  
Aids are claimed where battles shimmer,  
By thy side thy sons will stand.  
Hand in hand we'll face together,  
Blinding storm or sunny weather.

**By the Sea.**

THERE'S an old fellow, scraggy and gray,  
With a carpet-bag swung in his hand,  
And off to the pier he is making his way,  
With his daughter, along the wet sand.  
For a week I have watched them at play  
On the beach, or the grass, or the rocks ;  
He dressed in his shabby old garments of gray,  
She shining in fairy-white frocks.

He has gathered her shells ; he has made  
Great castles of sand by the sea ;  
He has sat by her shoes when it pleased her to wade ;  
Like a hen with one chicken was he.

But alas! for their holiday gone!

Now the steamer is out at the pier.

She whistles; they hurry aboard; she moves on:

And their dream is dissolved for the year.

Afar on the glimmering bay

She sinks to a smoke-trailing speck.

Still standing perhaps and still watching are they,

By the rail at the stern of the deck.

Still watching the sun-flooded land,

And those white dots—the houses—recede.

For there will the scenes of their happiness stand

Though they to the multitude speed.

I have wondered what office in lanes

Of the city will see him ere long,

At work till another year turns with its pains,

And its dust, and its toil, and its throng.

And I wonder if sweet it will seem,—  
This week by the sound of the sea;  
Will it flit with the wings of a delicate dream  
In the toils of the weeks that will be?

As in a wide forest—all dark  
And gloomy with awe-brooding shade,  
A clear grassy spot in the midst ye may mark  
Where the yellow light flecks the green glade.  
And there do the butterflies flit;—  
There cometh each joy of the woods;  
Even such be this week, such the sunshine of it,  
A glade where no shadow intrudes.

Old heart, art thou mateless? Is this  
The single delight of thy days?  
This bright little maiden thou bendest to kiss,  
In the midst of her exquisite ways.



· May your pillow, if lonely it be,  
Lie restful wherever ye dwell,  
And still through your dreams may the sound of  
the sea  
Chime in with the voice ye love well.

**Australia's Centenary.**

FROM out a lowly birth  
Have sprung full oft the choicest spirits of earth ;  
And many a peasant cot  
Hath nursed the infant founts of mighty thought.  
So, land of happy homes,  
That with high festival hast decked these domes  
Thy birth to celebrate !  
Though it was humble, and of poor estate,  
Yet from the squalor of thine infant years  
A youth sublime in promise now appears ;  
And on the verge doth stand  
Of comely manhood and achievement grand.

Joyous the strains that swell  
Where now thy happiest of all peoples dwell;  
Thou at whose birth there fell  
Only the bitter dew of outcast tears!  
Strange that the clank of chains  
Should thus have heralded upon thy plains,  
An hundred years ago,  
The sweetnesses from human arts that flow,—  
Yet now the rolling dawn  
Tinges with light no spot of earth whereon  
Freedom so kindly nestles as with thee.  
Dear land of light, of hope, of liberty!  
So we, thy sons, thank Heaven, and fondly say,  
“For ever blest that natal day,  
Though sad, and wet with tears.  
It touched the springs of secret-working time,  
Which rolled the wheels of fate-fulfilling years,  
To bring us of thee in thine opening prime.”

One hundred years are gone!  
Another hundred now in radiance dawn,  
While Expectation peers  
Down the long vista of the rosy years  
To follow, through the strenuous times afar,  
That glory, shining there like some full star,  
Which throbs with light, and inundates the air.  
Sound out ye trumpets, roll exultant drums  
A greeting to the mightier age that comes  
To lift Australia to imperial state!  
Oh may it be in fate!  
Oh may it be in destiny! that I  
Much of the glories yet may see, that wait,  
In those great years which lie  
Far in the century whereto the gate  
Is this thrice-notable day.  
And having somewhat seen, may speed thy way  
Into yet fairer times, and so, contented, die.

**Good-Night.**

DEAREST, press me close.  
Print the last kiss warm and deep.  
That dear head sheltered near my heart,  
And so—to sleep.

Whither do we go  
In these watches of the night?  
To what far regions do our souls  
Take silent flight?

What passes in these hours  
So long, so still, we nothing reck,  
Nor feel I that warm bosom, nor the arms  
Flung round my neck.

When falls the last long sleep,  
And life and love alike seem o'er,  
Shall we two, clasped in loving strength,  
Seek some far shore?

Or,—sprung from wide-spread gloom,  
A season blossoming,—like the flowers,  
Shall dumb decay at last receive  
Those souls of ours?

I know not. Mystery lies  
Close to us,—dark,—profound:  
While reason with its slender taper lights  
A feeble round.

But in that round is light,—  
And warmth, and love, and bosoms fond.  
Let us forget the doubt that presses near,  
The gloom beyond.

Thou dearest art my all ;  
And should I lose thee in the gathering night,  
I still should bless existence that it brought  
Thee to my sight.

**The Hyacinth Bulb.**

SWEET little May! She had planted a bulb,  
And had watered it morning and night,  
And patiently waited, and watched it, to see  
If the leaflets would burst into sight.

When her illness came, a long month was gone,  
But not a green speck in the brown earth shone.

And morning by morning we brought her the news,  
To the bed where her pretty face lay,  
And we saw her eye sparkle with hope till she read  
In our looks what we scarcely could say.

“Not yet!” she would lisp with her sweet little smile,  
“But it’s sure to come up,—if you watch it awhile.”



---

And even the night when the little thing died,  
Half waking from slumber, she said,  
“You will *promise*, mama dear, to carry me out  
Whenever it puts up its head.”

“Ah! yes, we shall carry you out, my own dear,”  
The mother sobbed into her fast-fading ear.

So they carried her out, and they laid her in earth,  
And they heaped the clay thick on her breast ;  
The fond mother haunted with tears the sweet spot ;  
While this comforting hope she caressed :  
“We have here laid the bulb in the earth for a while ;  
We shall see the flower shining in God’s own smile.”

But, ah! she had heard and had partly believed  
Those doubtings which many have penned,  
Who say that our lives are but things of this earth,  
And that death is their ultimate end.

“Can it be,” and the whisper struck chill to her  
heart,

“That the end of all life and all love is to part?”

For oh! it is hard for our reasons to grasp

What our hopes are so eager to show,

How our souls can be viewless, and yet be ourselves,

And what the land whither they go!

So, night upon night did she wakefully spend

And mournfully mused “What if death were the end?”

Meanwhile we had waited to see the bulb spring ;

But our hopes were fast passing away ;

When slowly there rose in the earth a green point

Till it entered the brightness of day.

And morning by morning, through sunshine and  
shower,

It woke to full glory, a hyacinth flower.

---

How the mother bent over its beauty, and wept,  
But with tears that were half of delight ;  
And breathed the rich odour from pendulous bells  
Till the twilight stole far into night.  
For it whispered of comfort and brightened her eyes,  
And lifted her heart to the star-kindled skies !

Is there mortal can tell, how from out the dull earth,  
Unscented, unlovely in hue,  
There may spring a bright blossom, all fragrant and  
sweet,  
And nodding with clusters of blue?  
And she said, " My own little one taught me to *trust* ;  
And I will not believe that her soul's in the dust."

**With the Past.**

SWEET memories cling around old times and places.  
They fade not : they but gather tenderer graces  
As the years roll. Here in this sombre wood  
Now stand I where long years ago I stood ;  
'Tis deep and stilly all. The plashing brook  
Pours unknown waters ; where no eye can look  
It sings its lonely music ; while some pool  
Breaks to the fall of bubbling threadlets cool.  
Now here I seat me in the self-same spot  
Where then I sat ; the spell that then was wrought  
By rustling leaves, and waters, and the flowers,  
Still brimmed and shining with the spring-tide showers,  
By sweet birds' songs, by the deep loneliness,

I feel again, for in this far recess  
All things are now as then. Here is the bank  
Whereon I rested ; from yon stone I drank  
The limpid waters. Then my slumb'rous ears  
Were filled with the same sounds, for passing years  
Renew the hum of insects and the sighs  
Of forest-stirring breezes ; yea, the cries  
Of birds forever at this season will  
Make musical the glades they then did fill.  
Yet seem they scarce as then. For I am now  
No more the same whose gladly-bared brow  
The woodland freshness kissed. Altered, I gaze,  
And try to think myself as in those days.  
It is in vain. The years have been, and fled.  
The joys they bore are gone : their balm is shed  
A vague regret across the soul is cast,  
Haunted by echoes of the ever past.  
A secret fragrance over all exhales

Which was not then. For so the mind prevails  
Over the senses. These are not merely trees  
That rustle ceaselessly like summer seas  
Upon a shingly shore : to mine ear they  
Are whispering comrades of old times. Those gray  
Lichen-clad rocks are not as other stones.  
Each well-remembered feature hath its tones  
Of sweetened sadness. Winds, and leaves, and falls,  
And murmuring eddies, and leaf-hidden calls,  
All weave them to this weirdly solemn tune,  
“The years are passing, and their end is soon ;”  
And Nature whispers, “Lay thy head upon  
My verdant lap. That fevered brow, my son,  
I'll gently fan. Why wilt thou longer toil  
'Mid struggling men, to win a worthless spoil ?  
Why eat thine heart out ? Wouldst thou win a  
name ?—

Behold my temple ! it will be the same

---

A hundred years hence as it seemeth now  
Its meanest part as beautiful;—but thou,—  
Will thy toil serve to keep thee here as these;  
Or will it stay thy passing like this breeze  
That flits it knows not whither. Then come, lay  
Thyself on this sweet bank, and if thou choose  
To lie with me and let thy spirit lose  
Itself in long repose, I shall begin  
To pour such soft and soothing whispers in  
Thy drowsy ears that all thy days shall pass  
In sweet forgetfulness of all that was,  
Of all that shall be. From the passing hour  
Thy dreams shall weave a harbour and a bower  
Of sheltered calm. So shall more joy remain  
Than aught that can be fought for among men.”

’Tis all too true. And fain, alas, would I,  
Thus laid at peace, let the calm hours go by!  
Yet forth must fare again, and in the strife

Must toil again. Such is the doom of life.  
While this still wood will hum, will ever hum,  
When twilight fades, and morning dewdrops come.  
Through all the years its little stream will flow,  
And sparkle joyously, the soft breeze blow.  
When I am far away 'twill still smile on,  
As if no heart that loved it well were gone.



**A Time-stained Sheet.**

FROM A PACKET OF FAMILY LETTERS.

THE hand which traced that flowing scroll  
Some eight and fifty years ago,  
Moved at the guidance of a soul  
Which burned with a pure passion's glow.  
That passion long since saw decay :—  
For fifty years that hand's been clay !

Yet here in simple manly phrase,  
He tells the maiden of his choice,

How her dear image haunts his days,  
How in his dreams he hears her voice.  
The lovely maid since then grew old,  
And years ago was laid in mould.

This stroke and that he ardent traced ;  
They read like music to her ear.  
When Christmas comes he'll homeward haste,  
To marry in the opening year.  
And oh, he says, forget not one  
Who dreams of you from sun to sun.

His hopes are high ; his coming life  
With simple joys is richly bright.  
He knows not of the care and strife  
Should quench that wakening morn in night.  
A few brief years of troubled toil,  
That generous heart was common soil.

That gentle maid, with grief opprest,  
    And years that rarely saw a smile ;  
A feeble widow, glad of rest  
    From human coldness, greed and guile,  
Beside a busy street is laid,  
Where bustling thousands hourly tread.

FINIS.



MELBOURNE :  
M'cARRON, BIRD & CO., PRINTERS,  
479 COLLINS STREET.



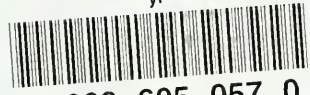
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